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# Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look

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# PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TITLE I SCHOOLS: A CLOSER LOOK

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# ABSTRACT

## PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TITLE I SCHOOLS: A CLOSER LOOK

by George William Kleidon

The students in Title I schools remain the most vulnerable in our education system. Principals in these schools must be exceptional and well prepared. However, principals have been trained in a universal approach that is not sufficient for those who lead schools with high poverty rates as well as culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The purpose of this mixed-methods descriptive study was to gain insight from principals about instructional leadership in Title I schools. Thirty-two principals described their perceptions about the preparation, supports, and challenges necessary to develop instructional leadership, including cultural proficiency for Title I schools. The findings in this study highlight the complexity of the principal role with a specific focus on Title I schools. While principals reported positive experiences as well as support from their leadership preparation programs and school districts, neither was sufficient to fully prepare them to be instructional leaders in Title I schools. Recommendations include a comprehensive, cohesive district coaching and mentoring program that considers elements necessary to build well-prepared and exceptional leaders for Title I schools.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many significant people in my life to whom I would like to dedicate this dissertation, who have served as a great inspiration in my life and have allowed me to accomplish a doctoral degree.

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Go Kleidon Gang!

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In the following narrative, Joe Panic (pseudonym name), chronicles his struggles as a novice principal. In 2006, Joe graduated with a master's degree in Educational Leadership along with his administrative credential. He was ready to set the world of education on fire. Unfortunately, that feeling was short lived. After his first year as an assistant principal, frustration and a sense of not belonging in the field of education started to set in due to the lack of knowledge about teaching and learning, curriculum, and insufficient support in his new role. There was minimum support for new administrators in his district and a lack of resources, coaches and/or mentors assigned to new administrators.

Joe transferred to a larger district where he hoped would be a better opportunity for him to grow as an educator. As Joe was now a second-year assistant principal, the school district assigned him a coach. Joe was excited and believed he would learn a great deal because his coach had a wealth of experience. Sadly, that was not the case because Joe's coach, a practicing school administrator, had many problems at his own school site and did not have much time to advise and coach Joe through his first year. The school district did not provide outside support or assign a new coach. Many district leadership team meetings, which could have been professional learning opportunities, were cancelled and the superintendent's book study group did not finish the assigned reading. Joe's principal colleagues shared the belief that the system's philosophy for improving building-level leadership was reactive instead of proactive: "Do not make your problems ours; you will hear from us when you mess up."

Additionally, Joe's new assignment was complicated because he and the principal did not agree on many decisions and actions. Many times, the principal made requests of Joe without providing specificity about the required tasks. As a result, Joe began to doubt his effectiveness as a leader and questioned his decision to change districts. Joe found relief in the informal mentoring of a more experienced assistant principal at the same school site. This informal mentoring really helped Joe grow as an administrator and prepared him for the many aspects and demands of the assistant principal position.

After four years as a middle school assistant principal, Joe was promoted to the position of elementary principal. He was much more confident in his first year as an elementary principal due to the informal mentoring he received as an assistant principal. Yet, his confidence was challenged once again. Joe made the following comment to his family one week into the start of school year, "Being a principal is not difficult." However, the remainder of that school year proved to be difficult in every aspect: making school-wide decisions, working with parents, managing a school budget, being an instructional leader, and evaluating teachers and other staff all proved much more challenging than Joe anticipated.

During Joe's second year as a principal he was assigned a coach to work with in the area of instructional leadership. Due to Joe's past experience working with a coach, he was hesitant to accept the district provided coach, however, he did accept the coach, hoping that the experience would be different. He also decided to meet with other elementary school principals for support, but he did not know them well enough to establish who he could turn to for advice. Joe still did not feel he was obtaining

knowledge and guidance from his assigned coach because of their lack of knowledge in current instructional practices and district initiatives. Sessions with his coach felt more like therapy. The coach proved to be a good listener but did not offer the advice or support that Joe needed to grow as an instructional leader. Furthermore, when the superintendent met with Joe to set annual performance expectations, Joe wondered how he was going to move his school to the next level given that there were no structures or systems in place at his school site for improving teaching and learning. Teachers worked in isolation without opportunities nor structured collaborations which focused on teaching and learning practices. Plus, a new math curriculum had just been adopted and an ELA curriculum would be adopted the following year.

Joe left the superintendent's office with a sense of overwhelm. Not only was he expected to successfully manage the school, he was now responsible for implementation of an elementary level curriculum that was different than his previous experiences in middle school. Joe wondered how he was going to meet performance expectations without extensive district support as well as without a coach or mentor.

## Background of the Problem

**The unresolved issue in education.** A successful principal must demonstrate strong instructional leadership to meet the new and challenging goals set forward in this era of accountability (Quinn, 2002). The responsibility for raising achievement levels of all students rests squarely on the principal's shoulders. Few principals are prepared to successfully carry out these roles during their novice years in the position. Experienced teacher leaders who have an administrative credential usually elect to stay in the

classroom. Most new principals entering the profession lack the skills, knowledge, or experience necessary to succeed. In some parts of California, the transition time from assistant principal to principal is less than two years. Even experienced, successful principals discover that they cannot sustain the necessary levels of energy and enthusiasm. Exhausted, they leave before retirement or at their first opportunity for retirement (Quinn, 2002).

All principals need support and guidance in their leadership positions. School systems have the opportunity to develop quality principals by committing to provide the support necessary to keep people in leadership positions. By supporting principals at all stages of their careers, principals can develop the skills and gain the experience that will help them successfully lead schools in this era of accountability.

In schools and districts across the country, the role of school leaders has been transformed throughout the years from plant manager to instructional leader (DuFour, 1999; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1998;). As plant managers, school leaders were tasked with ensuring that classrooms were staffed and that the day-to-day operations were running smoothly. However, in order to provide students with a quality 21st century education, the role has changed dramatically for modern principals. The responsibility of improving classroom instruction for every student has become a part of a principal's role. Instructional leadership has become synonymous with the role of principals as they support improvements in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010; Lochmiller, 2014).

In order to lead instructional programs, principals must enhance their expertise in teaching and learning. This task poses greater challenges for underprepared principals, resulting in uneven distribution of principal quality across the nation's schools. School leadership is very important in terms of student achievement, second only to the quality of curriculum and teacher's instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005).

Riordan (2003) further notes that the impact of school leadership on student learning is not as apparent in Title I schools. Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng (2010) report that low-income students, students of color, and Title I students are more likely to attend schools led by novice or temporary principals who do not hold advanced (master's) degrees and who attended less-selective colleges. The uneven distribution in quality of school leadership can negatively affect the achievement of students in Title I schools. Leadership preparation programs as well as state and national agencies are concerned with improving the quality of leaders so they can successfully lead low-performing schools (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014).

According to the DiPaloa and Tschannen-Moran (2003), the current additional demands on principals placed in schools with high poverty, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, and low per-pupil expenditure exacerbate the principal shortage. Therefore, districts with the fewest administrator applicants are typically those with high poverty, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, and low principal salaries.

**Quality of school leaders in raising student achievement.** California continues to face significant challenges in making sure all students are prepared for the demands of

the 21st century. Kearney (2010) asserts that one of the most critical areas required to close the student achievement gap is principal development because an effective principal is essential to school success.

Kearney (2010) explains that research confirms what practitioners and others in education have long known: strong, focused school-site leadership is a critical component in student and school success, including school improvement. Leadership is critical in setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. Findings from Edmonds (1979) and Cotton (2003) illustrate the principal's influence on leading school effectiveness. Hallinger and Heck (1996) conclude that the combination of school leadership's direct and indirect effects upon pupil outcomes were educationally significant.

A recent meta-analysis by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) indicates a significant correlation between principals' responsibilities and student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2004) further confirm that leadership is strongly linked to student achievement, and it is second only to classroom instruction when considered among all school-related factors that contribute to student success. Fullan (2014) asserts that the quality of principal leadership directly influences teacher retention, including in low-performing schools. Teachers decide to stay in their positions because of the trusting and honest relationships they have built with their principals.

A consistent finding in the literature about effective education is that good schools have strong leaders. According to Searby (2010), a wealth of research exists about the important role that a school principal plays in the life and health of a school community.

In a report on school leadership, it was noted that superintendents believed that behind every great school there's a great principal (Public Agenda, 2008). The impact of a principal on the school vision, culture, and instructional pedagogy directly affects school wide teaching and learning practices. Therefore, an improvement in the quality of principals can result in an improvement in the quality of education.

**Statement of the Problem**

The current problem is that principals in Title I schools may not have sufficient preparation or support to be effective instructional leaders. A lack of preparation and support in conjunction with the current demands of the role of principal may contribute to burnout and the shortage of good instructional leaders in Title I schools.

The lack of preparation and support is exacerbated by the need for additional instructional leadership expertise in Title I schools with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Due to the dynamic nature of educational reform mandates, a majority of principals working in Title I schools have received neither the preparation nor the quality support necessary to be effective instructional leaders. DiPaloa and Tschannen-Moran (2003) state that as the nation continues to reform education through standards and accountability, it increasingly looks to the principals to lead these changes. Furthermore, the role of principal has more difficult as a result of the increase in instructional responsibilities and managerial tasks.

There is a growing shortage of educational leaders who are ready to take on a principalship. The balance between becoming an effective instructional leader and attending to the many material responsibilities continues to present challenges to

administrators. DiPaloa and Tschannen-Moran (2003) report that principals lack the time and support necessary to be effective instructional leaders. Furthermore, DiPaloa and Tschannen-Moran (2003), state:

> Principals do not feel that they have sufficient authority and resources to get the job done and that they are working long hours to fill the gap. More than half of the principals currently on the job intend to retire in the next decade, raising questions about who will step forward to lead (p.43).

Thus, the principal shortage issue appears to be not just about whether there are sufficient numbers of credentialed candidates but also about whether newly eligible administrators are motivated to apply for the position of principal. There are educators who are qualified for the job of principal but who are not excited about the added responsibilities and current mandates on school reform; therefore, they do not apply for available positions. Coggshall, Stewart, and Bhatt (2008) conducted research in other states (e.g., Washington, New York, and Illinois), suggesting that this issue is not unique to California.

The perceived downsides of the principalship are significant to school leaders. not insignificant. Kearney (2010) reaffirms that the pressure of accountability is disproportionate to principals' level of authority: principals lack parental support, have less job security than their own teachers, lose close interaction with students, have challenges balancing work and home life, and must undertake the mire of politics and bureaucracy. Many individuals view the position of principal as unattractive and impossible. For many teachers contemplating their first administrative position, serving as a principal may not seem to be worth the trade. According to Gandossy and Guarneri (2008), the pool of potential leadership is shrinking and expected to drop by 15% over the

next decade, further complicating the recruitment picture.

Principal retention practices also contribute to the perceived principal shortage. Kearney (2010) states that many principals report their intent to leave their job before they are eligible for retirement. California principals are particularly reticent to continue their employment: only 48% of California principals report plans to stay in their job until retirement, as compared to 67% nationwide. Similarly, only 22% of the state's secondary principals plan to stay. Motivating and supporting effective veteran principals to stay and grow in their positions poses a serious challenge.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study was 1) to describe the perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools; 2) to identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills; and 3) to describe the perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the experiences of principals as instructional leaders in Title I school regarding the following: (a) preparedness, (b) supports, (c) challenges, and (d) successes?
2. What do principals identify as necessary to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools?

3. What are the perceptions of principals about culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools?

**Definition of Terms**

The term, Title I, refers to low-performing schools. The Title I designation began as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which provided federal funds as financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high percentages of children from low-income families in order to ensure that all children can meet challenging state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

**Summary**

This chapter presented the motivation for this study, which included the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and this study's significance. Research questions were stated and key words were defined. The next chapter will focus on the history of principal preparation in the United States by examining literature, which concerns the changing role of the principal, principal quality and the effects of an uneven distribution in Title I schools, principals' preparedness in management of low-performing schools, and culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the following areas as pertained to the purpose of this study: a) History of Principal Preparation, the Changing Role of the Principal from Plant Manager to Instructional Leader, b) Instructional Leadership, c) Principal Quality and the Effects of an Uneven Distribution in Low-Performing Schools, d) Culturally Proficient Instructional Leadership for Title I Schools, and e) Gap in the Literature. The literature review areas were selected to provide a solid background to the study, as well as to support the study's main components. It must be noted that during this study, there was limited research on principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools.

### History of Principal Preparation in the United States

The shift for principals from manager to instructional leader began during the 1980s and 1990s (Bossi, 2007), culminating in the 2001 passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This act accompanied an increased focus on school improvement and accountability measures, leading to more state scrutiny and accountability that filtered down to local school districts and instructional leaders (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005). In the 21st century, effective principals are expected to be instructional leaders, change initiators, and problem solvers (Blase & Kirby, 2000).

According to Kafka (2009), principals experience accountability pressure in deeply personal ways, causing high turnover in the position. The history of the school principal demonstrates that although specific pressures might be new, the call for principals to

accomplish great things with little support—and to be all things to all people—is certainly not new to the role of principal (Kafka, 2009).

School administration preparation programs largely followed the societal influences of history. The period of ideology (1820–1900) in public education and preparation produced a knowledge base of applied philosophy very similar to the one that informed teaching (Harris, Ballenger, & Leonard, 2004; Murphy, 1995). The prescriptive period (1900–1946) marked a new era for the field of public school administration, in which the foundation of principal preparation followed the business ideology of the time (Harris, et al., 2004; Murphy, 1995). The behavioral science period (1947–1985) resulted from the effects of World War II and its aftermath, wherein the principalship embraced patriotic values and believed education to be crucial for a democratic and strong society (Andrews & Grogan, 2002).

Current principal preparation (1986–present) focuses on improving schools and student achievement. Darling-Hammond (2007) asserts that America's underperforming schools and children are unlikely to succeed until leadership is taken seriously. In public education, the principal is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms and that ineffective practices are not allowed to fester.

The "effective schools" research of the 1980s identified the importance of principals who function as strong instructional leaders in improving academic achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Furthermore, the effective schools research identified the critical role principals in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers; in creating a learning culture within the school; and in supporting improvements in student learning by

principals becoming effective instructional leaders (Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995). In one of several recent studies identifying school leadership as a key factor in high-performing schools, researchers found that achievement levels were higher in schools in which principals undertake and lead the reform process; act as managers of school improvement; cultivate the school's vision; and make use of student data to support instructional practices and to provide assistance to struggling students (Kirst, Haertel, & Williams, 2005).

**Changing the Role of the Principal from Manager to Instructional Leader**

Levine (2005) stresses that being a school principal is becoming increasingly difficult with the ever-changing expectations that are coupled with insufficient training and support. Most principals struggle in their first year, according to Beam, Claxton, and Smith (2016). Principals are overwhelmed as a result of workload, task management, conflicts with adults and students, and the increased pressures placed upon them to be effective instructional leaders. Beam et al. (2016) further discuss the Namibian study, which indicates that principals displayed frustration when attempting to apply theoretical textbook principles learned in preparation programs to the practical realities of principalship. Thus, further highlighting the importance of ongoing and meaningful preparation and supports for principals as instructional leaders in this era of educational reform.

According to Rigby (2016), the principal's role has shifted from manager to instructional leader throughout the past three decades. This shift has changed a principal's focus from running school operations to ensuring students' academic success.

Bossi (2007) states that the principal is tasked with being the primary instructional leader and is focused on increasing achievement for all students. This change in the role of principal requires a new skill set (Bossi, 2007). A principal must now engage in a systems-thinking approach. Fullan (2002) asserts that this approach will require mobilizing the energy of teachers and building capacities amongst them as lead learners. Fullan (2002) further explains that principals are charged with transforming learning cultures both within their schools and within the teaching profession itself. With these shifts, "the role of principal is too narrow of a concept to carry the weight of the kinds of reforms that will create the schools that we need for the future" (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). Therefore, Bossi (2007), affirms the need to design effective principal preparation programs to foster and build the leadership and instructional skills necessary to increase student academic performance schools.

**Current demands of the role of principal.** The 21st century principal is expected to be an instructional leader while meeting state and district expectations. Hvidston, Range, Mckim, and Mette (2015) state that recent accountability mandates on student achievement have a direct impact on a principal's practice and are directly aligned with student achievement outcomes. Moreover, Barnett (2004) states principals are leading professional development activities, leading school councils, facilitating and analyzing standardized testing, which has changed to a much of completed system called the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC), while continuing to lead their school in effective instructional practices. Barnett (2004) further explains how the role of principal has changed in moving a school forward in the 21st century: "top down decision

making is being replaced with opportunities for teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to be involved in the learning process. This requires a change in culture requiring principals to rethink leadership strategies" (p. 121–122).

Since the principal's role as an instructional leader has evolved throughout the past three decades, Alvoid and Black Jr. (2014) state that the current mandates place student performance at the forefront; principals are now asked to learn and develop new skill sets to meet current student performance expectations. As a result, principals must become experts in student data, curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher development in order to meet the new expectations placed upon them (Alvoid & Black Jr., 2014). However, a principal's managerial responsibilities have not changed; they have increased. According to Alvoid and Black Jr. (2014), principals are expected to continue to be effective building managers, disciplinarians, and public relations experts in addition to effective instructional leaders.

The driving force behind this paradigm shift is clear, as school districts look for principals to be less managerial and more demonstrative of instructional leadership. According to Olson (2007), the drive to increase student performance outcomes at high levels—as embodied by the federal NCLB Act—requires a different kind of leadership that focuses on instruction and student achievement outcomes. This drive supports the growing body of research concerning the qualities of good school reform leaders.

According to the Association for Effective Schools (1996), the principal acts as an instructional leader who must effectively and persistently communicate the school's mission to staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the

characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program. The principal must understand contemporary instructional practices and trends. S/he must be able to analyze and articulate student data to teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders.

The principal is charged with the responsibilities associated with forming and creating a school culture built on collaboration and transparency amongst all stakeholders. Collaboration has become an important piece in facilitating school achievement. Hausman, Crow, and Sperry (2000) affirm that interagency collaboration in school has only recently been emphasized and argue that the principal will serve at the nexus of this partnership.

Thus, the principal's primary role is no longer that of a building manager and supervisor. Rather, his/her additional roles include instructional leader, data analyzer/interpreter, school improvement plan developer, and instructional coach, among many other, district-specific tasks. Effective principals must focus on their interpersonal skills, their capacity to read and adjust to situations, and their ability to understand and cope with far-ranging issues. According to Searby (2010), the research says that the principal's role is paramount to a healthy school community. Teachers, tests, and textbooks cannot produce the necessary results without effective principals leading the instruction (Searby, 2010).

The 21st century principal must be a skilled instructional leader, change initiator, manager, personnel director, problem solver, and visionary (Blase & Kirby, 2000). In the late 20th century, the evolution of principal preparation was affected by very different

influences, including an increased focus on student achievement, the development of national standards, and a belief in the accountability for all stakeholders.

**Principals as instructional leaders**. Fullan (2014) believes principals in the 21st century must lead teachers' development through the process of teaching and learning. He believes that it is important for principals to learn alongside teachers as both principals and teachers discover which instructional practices work and do not work for reaching student outcomes. Hallinger (2005) describes principals as instructional leaders who ensure the appropriate use of curriculum and instructional practices. However, supporting this process can be difficult, as Leithwood (1992) explains: "even principals who acknowledge their responsibility to foster teacher development often claim that is not a function they feel capable of performing well" (p. 86).

Moreover, principals are now expected to run a smooth school by "managing health, safety, and the building; innovate without upsetting anyone; connect with students and teachers; be responsive to parents and the community; answer to the district and above all deliver results" (Fullan, 2014, p. 6). Many scholars believe that principals must be the lead instructional leader at their school sites. Fullan (2014) argues that the principal's role must be repositioned as an overall instructional leader in order to maximize teacher learning and to achieve student outcomes. Kirtman (2013) confirms this repositioning regarding leaders and instruction:

> The role of the principal needs to be balanced between content and organizational leadership. These competences involve building instructional leadership into the culture of the school and building strong leadership in teachers. The educational leader in the overall leader of instruction, but he or she need to have time and skills to motivate and build teams and develop leadership capacity in his or her

> school for change. The educational leader should try not to do too much on his or her own in the instructional arena (p. 8).

Fullan's (2014) research states that the best principals are not the ones in classrooms several days per week but rather the ones that do it enough to maintain and develop instructional expertise. According to Fullan (2014), a principal who is defined as leading a school with collective capacity has allowed teachers to embrace change necessary to grow professionally. Collective capacity is defined as actions that lead to an increase in a group's collective power to improve student achievement. Examples of changes resultant from collective capacity include knowledge and skills gained in teaching and learning practices, conversations centered on student learning, and the ability to monitor student progress.

Kirtman (2013) illustrates the demands placed on principals to be effective instructional leaders: "school leaders are being told to focus on instructional leadership … narrow their initiatives to implement particular programs, and … are being told that teachers must be evaluated with stronger, more airtight forms and processes in order to weed out the poor teachers" (p. 45). However, Fullan (2014) says that this approach will alienate teachers and will not motivate them to continue their evolution as learners: "Programs will come and go, as will individual principals. Little worthwhile will stick" (p. 65).

**Instructional Leadership**

According to the research, principals are now expected to be the experts who support the implementation of teaching practices which in turn increase student learning outcomes. Fullan (2014) has characterized instructional leadership as the principal's main

responsibility in fostering student learning. Although principals play a key role in efforts to improve teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005), the pressure placed on school administrators to focus on instructional leadership has led to a culture shift that reflects the current environment of accountability and the commitment to reducing the achievement gap. Kose (2009) believes that for schools to succeed, principals must continue to maintain their role as visionaries and school building leaders. However, Southworth (2002) argues that specific areas within instructional leadership interrelate, and leadership practices vary from setting to setting. Additionally, Southworth (2012) notes that instructional leadership had been studied from the leader perspective but not from the perspective of teachers, parents, classified staff. Southworth (2002) stresses that it is important to know what these stakeholders thought about instructional leadership on their campus.

The critical question is whether instructional leadership lacked differentiation and if there is a need to review it in different ways and with different concepts. Southworth (2002) feels that there is a tendency to over-focus on leadership in the context of improving poorly performing schools, instead of looking at leadership in other settings, the influence of school size on the character of the instructional leader, or the changes to this leadership style over time as people become more experienced.

Southworth (2002) argues that school leaders are expected to be organizational managers as well as good instructional leaders who drive effective teaching and learning. Fullan (2014) agrees that principals must ensure effective management of schools but that their core focus must remain on the school's learning priorities. School leaders are

expected to possess the needed skills to be effective instructional leaders pertinent to their success as leaders. Therefore, it is critical for researchers and scholars to portray success. Southworth (2002) documents six approaches of effective and successful instructional leadership. One of these approaches presents the idea that leaders must attend to the behaviors of teachers as they engage in teaching and learning activities that positively affect student growth. Southworth (2002) states that instructional leadership is an adaptive process that occurs in schools rather than is independent in nature. Instructional leadership allows for causal relationships and may be multidirectional and change over time.

Southworth (2002) outlines three aspects of effective instructional leadership: communicating with teachers (conferencing), supporting teachers' professional growth, and encouraging teacher reflection. These behaviors are connected to visibility, teacher praise, and the extension of autonomy as opposed to the maintenance of control. Southworth (2002) considers conferencing to be the greatest form of instructional supervision, describing it as a set of skills critical to instructional leadership. This skill set includes professional coaching, which requires high levels of professional knowledge and experience. Great instructional leaders realize that "most teachers expand their teaching range only with carefully designed support and assistance" (Blase and Blase 1998).

In recent years, there has been a major interest in linking leadership to student outcomes. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) imply that this interest reflects the desire of policymakers to close the achievement gap. Robinson et al. (2008) examine the impact that specific types of leadership have on student learning outcomes via a comparison

study on whether transformational leadership or instructional leadership have a more meaningful impact on improving student learning outcomes. A survey of 199 leadership component items was grouped into five categories of leadership practices, including establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, ensuring quality teaching, leading teacher learning and development, and ensuring orderly and safe environments.

Robinson et al. (2008) summarize the impact of transformational leadership (ES=0.11) in comparison to instructional leadership (ES=0.30), finding that instructional leadership had three times the impact on student outcomes. Robinson et al. (2008) believe the reason for these results is that transformational leadership is more focused on relationships created between educational leaders. The quality of these relationships is not a predictor of student outcomes. Robinson et al. (2008) state that educational leadership comprises much more than building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff, or an inspired vision. Leaders who practice instructional leadership focus their attention on relationships and the business of teaching and learning to improve student outcomes. Thus, relationships must focus on specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved in this type of work are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership.

Research conducted by Hallinger (2005) reinforces the idea that principals must be strong instructional leaders. The purpose of Hallinger's (2005) study was to determine the effect of instructional leadership on the role of principals by analyzing theoretical developments, empirical studies, and practices. Hallinger's (2005) review examines the educational changes involving principals over the past 25 years, identifying how

principals were once the lone person responsible for instructional leadership at their school sites. A principal's instructional responsibility has changed dramatically as a result of NCLB's new accountability system. Hallinger (2005) affirms that instructional leadership involves the work of many persons, including the principal, teachers, and classified staff. A question arose of whether principals were aware of the instructional demands that had been placed upon them, but Hallinger (2005) concludes that principals were aware of the demands and changes in educational leadership. Consequently, responsibilities and accountability measures have increased, placing a higher need for reform in instructional leadership practices.

Based on previous research, Hallinger (2005) states that instructional leadership continues to focus on the school vision and mission, management of programs, and positive school climate. According to Hallinger (2005), instructional leadership is gradually shifting and now focuses on creating a collective purpose around goals and student learning, fostering continuous improvement, developing a climate of high expectations, shaping the school structure, organizing activities for staff development, and being visible.

Hallinger (2005) asserts that instructional leadership is just as important today as it was 25 years ago, but instructional leadership has become the center of attention which was not the case 25 years ago. The reasoning for this is due to the current accountability measures in place and high expectations set forth on student outcomes by local agencies. According to Hallinger (2005), the job description of a principal's duties has changed to accommodate school systems as well as the accountability measures set in place by

NCLB. Hallinger's (2005) study shows that instructional leadership has not diminished from leadership practices but rather has continued to influence the importance of finding qualified principals who are capable of leading Title I schools.

**Facilitating teacher learning and development (skills).** Robinson (2011) describes instructional leadership as a mindset which must include a focus on promoting deep student learning, professional inquiry, and trusting relationships as well as seeking evidence in action. Furthermore, Robinson (2011), believes a learning environment must be safe and secure, providing effective interventions for students in need. Robinson (2011) affirms that supporting teachers with genuine praise, appreciation, support, and emotional intelligence leads to quality instruction.

A number of recent research studies show that school leaders have an impact on student learning (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Robinson, 2011).
Robinson (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of approximately 27 studies to examine the impact of educational leadership on student learning. Robinson's analyses of the studies identified five different leadership practices that made a significant difference to student learning (see Table 1).

Table 1

*The Five Leadership Practices of Student-Centered Leadership*

| Leadership Practice | Effect Size |
|---|---|
| Establishing goals and expectations | 0.42 |
| Resourcing strategically | 0.31 |
| Ensuring quality teaching | 0.42 |
| Leading teacher learning and development | 0.84 |
| Ensuring an orderly and safe environment | 0.27 |

*Note.* Meta-analysis of 30 studies which examined the impact of educational leadership on student learning.

Robinson (2011) believes the five leadership practices will provide leaders with information as to which areas will have the most impact on student learning; however, they say very little about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to make the practices or dimensions work. Robinson (2011) contends that there are three capabilities that are needed to engage in these five practices: 1) the capability to apply relevant knowledge within a leader's practice, 2) the capability to solve complex problems, and 3) the capability to build relational trust are needed for high quality teaching and learning.

Robinson (2011) explains there are specific elements within each category, but the message they carry as a set is quite clear. The collected data identifies leading teacher learning and development as the most significant factor—twice as powerful as any other domain. Tied for second most significant factors were ensuring quality teaching and establishing goals and expectations. In the following subsections, I will discuss the

impact that establishing goals and expectations, ensuring quality teaching, and leading teacher learning and development have on a principal as learning leader.

**Establishing goals and expectations.** Schools are complex environments with multiple competing agendas. Robinson (2011) contends that goal setting with all stakeholders is an important factor towards reducing fragmentation and promoting coherence. "Goals must provide an opportunity to achieve what is valued, and people need to accept that the current situation falls short of that vision to warrant pursuit of the goal" (Robinson, 2011, p. 48). A school vison Robinson (2011) contends does not make a difference in a school if it is seen as just empty words. Robinson (2011) discusses a study that took place in Australian high schools demonstrating that stronger principal espousal of abstract vision statements generated more negative the teachers' reactions, as the teachers felt the principals were not being true to the school vision. Thus, abstract visions that cannot be implemented do not inspire nor motivate changes in instruction. Robinson (2011) argues that leaders should not set challenging performance goals if they do not understand what is involved in fully achieving the goals; rather, leaders should set learning as a priority in place of performance goals. Furthermore, Robinson (2011) asserts that this prioritization will lead to conversations, which will build commitment goals and model constructive problem talk at various stages of the learning process.

**Ensuring quality teaching.** Robinson (2011) states that leaders in higher performing schools are distinguished from their counterparts in otherwise similar lower performing schools by their personal involvement in planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and teachers. Teachers in higher performing schools report that their leaders are actively

involved in collegial discussion of instructional matters, including how instruction affects student achievement (Heck, Marcoulides, & Lang, 1991).

Robinson (2011) stresses that the leadership in higher performing schools is distinguished by its active oversight and coordination of their instructional program. School leaders and staff work together to review and improve teaching—an idea captured in the concept of shared instructional leadership (Heck et al., 1990; Heck et al., 1991; Marks & Printy, 2003). Furthermore, Robinson (2011), explains that high-performing schools' leadership was more directly involved in coordinating the curriculum across grade levels than in Title I schools.

Robinson (2011) states that in higher performing school's principals were committed to making classroom observations and providing subsequent feedback to improve teaching and learning. Teachers in higher performing schools report that their leaders set and adhered to clear performance standards for teaching (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991) and made regular classroom observations that helped them improve their teaching (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Heck, 1992; Heck et al., 1990).

Higher performing schools ensured that teachers systematically monitored student progress (Heck et al., 1990) and that test results were used for the purpose of program improvement (Heck et al., 1991). "Teachers who use data to evaluate student progress, adjust their teaching, plan their weekly program, and give students feedback was a strong indicator of school quality, and level of school quality had a significant influence on student achievement in reading and math" (Robinson, 2011, p. 663).

In conclusion, school leaders work directly with teachers to plan, coordinate, and evaluate teacher-learning practices within higher performing schools. They are more likely than their counterparts in Title I schools to provide evaluations that teachers describe as being useful and to ensure that student progress is monitored and the results are used to improve and change teaching practices.

**Leading Teacher Learning and Development**

Robinson (2011) found that the principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters  but who also—and most importantly—participates as a learner with teachers in helping move the school forward. Leading teacher learning means being proactively involved with teachers such that principal and teachers alike are learning. Fullan (2014) thinks that the principal who covers minimal areas—such as establishing a vision, acquiring resources for teachers, and working to help individual teachers—does not necessarily learn what is specifically needed to stimulate ongoing organizational improvement. To stimulate ongoing organizational development, the principal must make both teacher learning and his or her own learning a priority.

Within this domain of teacher learning and development, Robinson (2011) found two critical factors: the ability of the principal to make progress as a collective endeavor and the skills for leading professional learning. According to Robinson (2011), both factors require the principal to be present as a learner. Robinson (2011) explains that principals who do not take the learner stance for themselves do not learn much from daily operations despite the number of years of so-called experience they may accumulate, as little of that prior experience was really aimed at their own learning. Thus, principals

need to chart their own learning and be aware of its growth from the first day if they are going to get better at leading. According to Robinson (2011), this learning is best done by helping teachers learn and seeing the teachers in their school as members within the larger school learning community. Robinson (2011) believes principals who are seen as learners themselves—who visibly struggle as they attempt to understand new pedagogies, who use assessment practices in relation to their own learning, and who seek to learn from students and teachers about their learning—have the greatest potential to influence the learning of others. Naturally, these leaders learn more and are better able to assist teachers in their learning.

**Communities of practice.** Lave and Wenger (1998) believe that communities of practice are everywhere and that people learn from their daily interactions and experiences with others. People have daily opportunities to learn from each while completing activities at work, school, home, or in their leisure time. For some of these activities, individuals may even be core members. Communities of practice comprise social learning experiences through members' mutual engagement, which binds the groups, and through the shared repertoire of resources which are developed over time by group members.

Lave and Wenger (1998) explain that learning occurs within the relationships people build amongst themselves. The conditions bring people together and allow for particular information to become relevant. The characteristics of communities may vary: some may have names while others do not. Without these points of contact and systems of

relevancies, Lave and Wenger (1998) believe there can be no learning and very little memory.

Educators need to be able to critically analyze ideas with other people in similar and shared communities, according to Lave and Wenger (1998). Learning activities need to be planned by students and adults to stimulate and foster student learning. Lave and Wenger (1998) believe that learning is part of daily living and that problem solving is a direct outcome that is learned from daily experiences.

**Professional learning communities (PLCs).** Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) suggest that educational reform depends on teachers' ability to build collective capacity, defining collective capacity as a complex blend of conditions which support the infrastructure of support in the learning process. This structure provides school communities and school systems the support and power to sustain learning over time. Stoll et al. (2006) believe that PLC creation appears to be a good approach towards building school-wide sustainability for improvement. Stoll et al. (2006) suggest that school communities need to work together rather than in isolation to identify instructional practices that meet the needs of all students.

DuFour and Fullan (2013) believe that structured PLCs can change the culture of learning at low-performing schools. With the achievement gap between high- and low-performing schools growing in America, PLCs can play a central role in improving engagement of students and the sense of efficacy among teachers. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Manny (2010) outline the six characteristics of high-performing PLCs: a shared vision, a collaborative culture with a focus on learning, a collective inquiry into

best practices and current reality, an action-orientated mindset or "learning by doing," a commitment to continuous improvement, and a results-orientated mindset. Unpacking these six characteristics represents the first step in creating high performing PLCs, according to DuFour and Fullan (2013). Example of PLCs are teachers working together by planning curriculum and sharing teaching practices, teachers working together to identify at-risk students, and teachers providing support for each other (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

### Principal Quality and the Effects of an Uneven Distribution in Low-Performing Schools

Title I and low-performing schools find it more difficult to recruit and retain good instructional leaders. Kaplan, Owings, and Nunnary (2005) believe this difficulty results from high-performing schools attracting and retaining good instructional leaders. A principal's job becomes more challenging as managerial and instructional responsibilities continue to mount as a result of the increasing demands of school reform and accountability aimed toward student performance (Stark-Price, Muñoz, Winter, & Petrosko, 2006). According to Kaplan et al. (2005), placing strong instructional leaders in challenging schools allows for school reform to take place in a collaborative manner among teachers and instructional leaders via decision making, increased time for teachers to work collaboratively, and support for teachers to create a safe learning environment. Furthermore, Kaplan et al. (2005) believe that it is important to place strong principals in schools both to build the necessary skills in teaching and learning and to see a positive effect on school culture.

Darling-Hammond (2007) states that districts and their schools have fallen into low-performing status because they are not hiring principals who show exemplary leadership. Papa (2007) supports Darling-Hammond's claim after reviewing policy initiatives for effective schools in the area of principal recruitment and retention. Furthermore, Papa (2007), recommends that school districts review such policies along with the initiatives aimed towards attracting and retaining high quality principals for their schools. Papa (2007) asserts that principals working in schools going through reform must overcome the challenge of addressing the policy initiatives set forth by NCLB in addition to everyday duties.

According to Darling-Hammond (2007), principals who work in underperforming schools must understand the difference between NCLB mandates and the importance of instruction in order to move schools through educational reform. Furthermore, she asserts the importance for low-performing schools to secure leaders who meets exemplary standards due to the ever-changing mandates set upon principals, which include raising student achievement levels in order to close the achievement gap by improving tests scores for all groups of students, providing parents with choice, and retaining better qualified teachers. Darling-Hammond (2007) believes that, in time, NCLB will be shown to be harmful to students and teachers because NCLB does not allow time for principals working in low-performing schools to focus on instructional practices that address the specific needs of groups of students. According to Darling-Hammond (2007), a system that does not address all students' academic and social needs is flawed.

**Instructional Leaders in Title I Schools: Culturally Proficient Leadership**

This literature review shows that this area of research, which concerns principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools, has been under-researched and under-theorized, particularly in identifying the experiences, supports, and culturally proficient leadership needed for principals to be effective instructional leaders in Title I schools. Instructional leadership in the 21st century requires leaders to understand new and exemplary teaching practices.

For example, the literature is clear that most schools with high poverty or culturally and linguistically diverse students are labeled Title I schools. It is likely that 21st century school leaders will serve their first principalship in Title I schools (Mendoza-Reis & Smith, 2014). Moreover, research indicates that effective school leadership from the principal position can affect student achievement and teacher performance. Furthermore, school leaders play a crucial role in advocating for equitable policies, which will improve academic achievement (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014). Many scholars assert that regarding factors that affect student improvement in schools, the quality of the school leader is second only to the quality of curriculum and teacher instruction (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Loeb et.al. (2010) state that low-income students, students of color, and Title I students are more likely to be led by (a) novice principals, (b) leaders who do not hold advanced degrees, and (c) leaders who attended less-selective colleges. Loeb et.al. (2010) further note that an uneven distribution of quality leadership can jeopardize successful schooling.

The importance of instructional leadership quality in Title I schools is addressed in the literature by a conceptual model developed by Mendoza-Reis, Sarellano-Quintanar and Flores (2009). Figure 1 below depicts the conceptual model that reframes instructional leadership for schools with culturally and linguistically diverse students, most of whom attend Title I schools. The conceptual model includes a tri-level framework that addresses instructional leadership in a new way: 1) instructional level, 2) pedagogical level, and 3) personal level (see Figure 1).

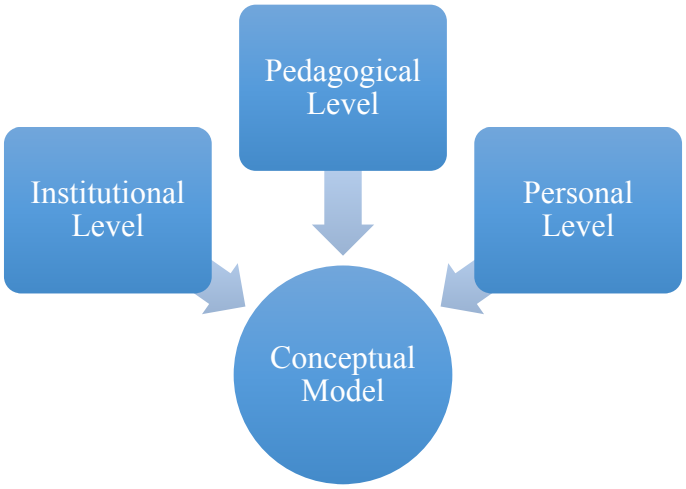


*Figure 1:* Tri-Level Framework. Adapted from conceptual model by Mendoza-Reis, Sarellano-Quintanar, and Flores (2009).

Mendoza-Reis et al. (2009) assert that principal quality in schools with a focus on instructional leadership begins with pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, Mendoza-Reis et al. (2009), say that without personal and ideological clarity, the shift from a deficit school culture mindset to one of an inclusive culture cannot effectively occur. Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) explain that reculturing schools will only take place once school leaders 1) practice an advocacy stance towards English learners, 2) improve their

knowledge base about teaching and learning, and 3) develop an ideological clarity that will transform schools. Table 2 below displays the conceptual model in detail.

Table 2

*Reculturing Instructional Leadership: A Conceptual Model*

| Institutional Level | Pedagogical Level | Personal Level |
|---|---|---|
| Identifying and addressing institutional inequities by<br>a) identifying structural barriers to student achievement<br>b) taking an "advocacy stance" as leaders in addressing inequities | Instructional leadership that defines content knowledge necessary for leading schools with English learners:<br>a) pedagogical knowledge<br>b) sociocultural theory<br>c) culturally relevant pedagogy<br>d) language & literacy acquisition and development in L1 & L2 | Exhibiting ideological clarity via<br>(a) self-examination of deficit assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about English learners<br>(b) support teachers to examine deficit assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about English learners |

*Note.* Adapted from Mendoza-Reis, Sarellano-Quintanar, and Flores (2009).

**Level one: Institutional level advocacy leadership.** The student population throughout public schools has become more diverse than ever before. However, while the student population changes, leadership preparation programs continue to focus on a universal model of leadership (Ritchie, Mendoza-Reis, & Lindstrom, 2005). Educational leadership studies acknowledge that modern leaders must be equipped with skill sets centered on advocacy and cultural proficiency (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell, 2005; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Schools with diverse students require dynamic leaders who can look at education through a different lens in order to close the achievement gap (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014).

In the book, *Advocacy Leadership: Toward a Post-Reform Agenda in Education*, Gary Anderson (2009) explains that advocacy leaders believe in and will fight for a high quality and equitable public education for all students. Anderson (2009) asserts that educators must rethink leadership and include both authenticity and advocacy in order to challenge the status quo in education. Lindsey, Roberts, and Campbell-Jones (2005) define proficiency leadership as "the state of honoring the differences among cultures, seeing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among various cultures" (p. 4). They describe a culturally proficient school as "policies and practices of a school or the values and behaviors of an individual that enable the school of person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment" (p.146). Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) note:

> advocacy and proficient leaders do not hesitate to confront a pedagogical school culture that creates obstacles and barriers towards closing the achievement gap. Instead they reject a culture of deficit thinking and they are quick to notice inequitable policies that may affect the academic achievement. They also engage in interrogating such policies with teachers, district office[s], communities and families and they challenge the "sacred cows" in education such as teacher and student placements, discipline policies, assessment and transportation policies that may have contributed to inequitable policies (p. 195–196).

Furthermore, Mendoza-Reis and Smith (2013) state that new leaders change pedagogical culture in schools by guaranteeing that teachers foster advocacy and cultural proficiency abilities.

**Level two: Pedagogical level instructional leadership.** Extensive research supports the importance of the role the principal plays in supporting teachers and leading schools through implementation of effective instructional practices that lift student achievement (Robinson, et al., 2008). Thus, effective instructional leadership requires a commitment

to teaching and student learning (Robinson, 2011). Purkey and Smith (1983) found that strong leadership was a crucial part of successful schools. This claim was further supported by Hallinger and Heck (1998), who conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between leadership and student achievement. These studies, among others, support that instructional leadership is crucial to school improvement. Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) note that Title I schools are less likely to have a leader with a strong background in instruction who can lead to school improvement.

How do leaders supplement their preparation to become effective instructional leaders? Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) believe the answer lies in the types of professional development planned at school sites. They suggest that principals must possess a deep knowledge based in teacher development in order to guide principals in structuring professional developments and to change teaching and learning for all students. Principals need to understand pedagogy and must be able to work with teachers in changing their teaching practices as they pertain to teachers' development scales.

**Level three: Personal level ideological.** School leaders must name and have courageous conversations that interrogate assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about students. Educational leaders must address these assumptions, which can become major barriers in increasing student achievement. Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) explain that the suggests that educational leaders name and interrogate themes that pose problems to reculturing a school's teaching, learning, political, and personal environment.

## Gap in the Literature

Principals play a key role in efforts to improve teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005); however, within the current environment of accountability and the commitment to reducing the achievement gap, the pressure placed on school administrators to focus on instructional leadership has led to a cultural shift. There may agreement on instructional leadership behaviors, but little is known about the how to support the instructional leadership of Title I principals. The model of using principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools has been under-researched and under-theorized, particularly in identifying the experiences, supports, and culturally proficient leadership needed for principals to be effective instructional leaders in Title I schools.

## Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

This chapter presents the methodology used to address the research questions of this study. The chapter includes the purpose statement, research questions, rationale for the research design, and the research design itself. This description of this study also includes population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures and analysis, and limitations of the study.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to (1) describe the perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools, (2) identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills, and (3) understand perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools.

### Research Design

This study was a mixed methods, exploratory, and descriptive study, which was appropriate to provide a description of a principals' perceptions about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools. The descriptive study allowed for an exploration of the types of supports principals identify as necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills. According to Gay (1996), a descriptive study "involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the ways things are" (p. 249). According to Issac and Michael (1995), the purpose of descriptive research is to "describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population

or area of interest, factually and accurately" (p. 50). Issac and Michael (1995) explain four key purposes of survey studies: a) to collect detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena, b) to identify problems or justify current conditions and practices, c) to make comparisons and evaluations, and d) to determine what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefits from their experience in making future plans and decisions. The study was descriptive because it determined and reported the existing perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders as well as identified perceived areas for additional supports for instructional leaders in Title I schools.

A sole researcher conducted this study and developed instruments to gather data, aiming to address the joint purposes and research questions. The researcher collected, analyzed, and shared data gathered from principals' descriptions of their perceptions concerning preparedness as instructional leaders in Title I schools. The researcher also identified supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.

The selection of research methods depended largely on the situation and the appropriateness of the measures. The use of mixed methods research was selected for this study because the blending of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed the researcher to gather both closed-ended and open-ended data, to draw interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data (Creswell, 2013). Survey research provided quantitative data on descriptions of trends, attitudes, and/or opinions from a large sample population (Creswell, 2013) as well as an account of the relationships

between preparedness and necessary support variables. Qualitative data was collected via interviews, offering numerous perspectives on the study topic. This method of collection provided the researcher with a multifaceted picture of the situation, adding to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Interviews assisted in gathering qualitative data by creating conversations with a purpose (Creswell, 2013). These interviews were conducted by the researcher to find out what was "in and on the person's mind as it related to the topic" (Patton, 2015, p. 426).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allowed the interviewer to gain demographic information while facilitating and prompting a discussion on the phenomena via a set of open-ended questions. This method provided an opportunity for a mixture variably structured questions throughout the interview process. When specific and desired information is needed from all respondents, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert the interview must be more structured to explore particular responses further. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative methods were appropriate to address the focus of this study because they explored issues within the context in which the participants saw fit to address problems or concerns.

Furthermore, a mixed methods research design of this study involved philosophical assumptions which guided the collection and analysis of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, Creswell (2013), explains the premise of the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches would provide a better understanding of the problem than either of the two approaches alone.

## Population and Sample

The population for this study was comprised of principals working in Title I schools from seven school districts in San Jose, California. The 2016–2017 California Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) School-Level Data file was used to identify the schools which are classified as Title I schools with greater than 40% of students designated as low-income for the purpose of this research study. The school districts and principals selected for this study have similar student demographics and reside within an eight-mile radius of each other. The participants in this study consisted of principals between the ages of 25 and 65 from varied ethnic and gender backgrounds. All participation was voluntary and participants had the option to opt-out of the survey and interview phases of the research study at any time. By conducting surveys, the researcher sought to identify both the thoughts of principals as it pertained to their preparedness to be instructional leaders and the supports they perceived to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership.

## Selection Criteria for the Sample

**Setting and participant selection.** Purposive sampling was used to identify and select research sites (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) based on the purposes of this study. This study focused on principals of Title I schools within seven participating school districts. The 2016–2017 FRPM School-Level Data file was downloaded from the California Department of Education website, (California Department of Education, 2017), which was updated on May 9, 2017. The FRPM school level data file was used to

identify the school districts and schools which were classified as Title I schools for the purpose of this research study.

Moreover, this study applied purposive and convenience-sampling methods to identify individuals who had been principals in Title I schools. Each of these sampling methods was determined to be the best means of acquiring the appropriate data to address the research questions. Purposive sampling "provides information that is useful, that helps us learn about the phenomenon, or that gives voice to individuals who have not been heard" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 252). The data in this study was collected and analyzed from the principals who participated from the seven school districts because it best fit the research problem.

The researcher selected convenience sampling because the participants were physically accessible with locations reasonably near the researcher. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert that convenience sampling allows for specific individuals and/or institutions to benefit from the research problem and central phenomenon of a study. In this way, participants in this study could also benefit from its research problem and phenomenon.

**Instrumentation**

For this study, the researcher developed and utilized two instruments, as no instruments existed to assess the purposes of this study. Instrument design by the researcher is acceptable when "no instrument may exist for measuring the variable of interest so the researchers need to develop their own instruments" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 189). The instruments included a survey and a set of interview questions. Both instruments are described in the following section.

## Survey

Survey factors that identified instructional leadership preparedness and supports were created based upon review of the relevant literature, which provided key aspects in becoming an effective instructional leadership. Furthermore, participants were asked to provide and discuss the areas of supports they have received thus far in leading a Title I school.

The survey data collected allowed the researcher to answer the research questions by (1) examining the attitudes, opinions, and or behaviors of a large group, (2) choosing a large number of participants using random selection, (3) gathering information and describing trends in the data, and (4) making conclusions about the larger population.

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) assert that use of surveys represents an adequate procedure by which one can identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large collection of individuals. Additionally, surveys assist in identifying significant views and attitudes of individuals within a specific period of time.

**Phase 1.** In Phase 1 of the survey, the researcher invited 54 principals from Title I schools to complete a 29-item survey. The survey sought to describe their perceptions concerning instructional leadership preparedness, to identify supports they perceived to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership, and perceptions about their culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools. In addition, the survey in this study was developed to assess individual principal's thoughts, opinions, and feelings, thus aligning with the first characteristic outlined above by Creswell (2013).

Furthermore, the survey was designed to allow the researcher to gather participants' perceptions on preparedness and supports as instructional leaders. The survey also acted as a screener, leading into Phase 2 of the study (one-on-one interviews) and allowing the researcher to identify the principals who opted to participate in the interview process.

The survey developed for this study consisted of the following parts: (I) instructional leadership preparedness and supports, (II) identifying components of effective instructional leadership, (III) reculturing instructional leadership in Title I schools, (IV) areas of support for principals of Title I schools, and (V) background information.

**Part I: Instructional leadership preparedness and supports.** Survey item (a) asked principals to identify the degree to which they have received preparation for and an understanding of instructional leadership upon completion of their principal preparation program. In the survey, principals were asked to rate their levels of preparedness to be instructional leaders in seven instructional leadership areas: 1) school vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students, 2) promotes and supports collaborative processes, 3) principals as "Leaders of Learning" (Monitors instructional programs areas commonly taught in preparation programs, 4) Data driven leadership, 5) Strong relationships with parents and community, 6) Promotes and guides the use of technology, and 7) Knowledge of culturally relevant instruction. Their preparedness and understanding of the seven instructional leadership areas was rated on a three-point Likert scale. The value "1" was "quite a bit," and "3" was "little to none."

Survey item (b) asked principals to rank the areas of support they receive as instructional leaders. Principals were asked to rank the areas of instructional leadership in

which they have received support by using a six-point Likert scale. The value "1" was "least support," and "6" was "most support."

In survey item (c), principals were asked to discuss and provide examples of support(s) they have received in becoming an instructional leader from principal preparation programs, mentors, coaches, and/or their districts to lead Title I schools. Lastly, survey item (d) asked principals to give their opinions on how their districts have supported them in fostering cultures of instructional leadership.

**Part II: Identifying components of effective instructional leadership.** This part of the survey asked participants to identify the components of effective instructional leadership they thought to be important in leading Title I schools. Principals were asked to rank the five leadership dimensions: 1) Establishing goals and expectations, 2) Resourcing strategically, 3) Ensuring quality teaching, 4) Leading teacher learning and development, and 5) Ensuring an orderly and safe environment (Robinson, 2011), according to significance in affecting student outcomes as well as teaching and learning practices. Participants were also asked to rate the impact of teaching and learning practices upon building instructional leadership practices as a result of preparedness.

In survey item (a), principals were asked to rank the five leadership dimensions in terms of their effect on student outcomes. The importance was rated on a five-point Likert scale. The value "1" was "lowest," and "5" was "highest" in terms of importance.

Survey item (b) provided principals with a list of the following seven instructional leadership areas: 1) professional learning communities, 2) personal prior (teacher) beliefs, 3) professional development or training received, 4) personal identity (as a school leader)

and practices, 5) district role in providing support, 6) personal teaching experiences and perspectives, 7) involvement in decision-making processes either at district level, and asked participants to rate the areas' importance on a three-point Likert scale. The value "1" was "quite a bit," and "3" was "little to none."

In survey item (c), principals were provided with a list of five core beliefs to effective instructional leadership, based on the 4 dimensions instructional leadership framework: 1) instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning, 2) instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders of which the principal serves as the "leader of leaders", 3) a culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice, 4) instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and learning diversity in the school community, and 5) instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and of people — recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating — particularly in changing environments as set forth by Robinson (2011). Participants were asked to rank the five core beliefs in order of perceived importance. The importance of these instructional core beliefs was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with value "1" designating "lowest" and value "5" designating "highest" in terms of importance. Lastly, survey item (d) asked principals to explain their ranking choices from survey item (c).

**Part III: Reculturing instructional leadership in Title I schools.** Principals were asked to respond to their understanding of culturally proficient leadership using a tri-level

framework from Mendoza-Reis et al. (2009) that included (1) personal knowledge and beliefs, (2) pedagogical knowledge about language acquisition, social justice teaching, and (3) knowledge about institutional inequities. In survey item (a), principals were asked which of the three culturally proficient leadership beliefs—personal, pedagogical, or institutional—were most important to leading a Title I school. The importance of these culturally proficient beliefs was rated on a three-point Likert scale, with the value "1" designating "lowest" and the value "3" designating "most" in terms of importance.

Survey item (b), principals were asked to write narratives from their own experiences that were reflective of their culturally proficient visions and philosophies concerning leading Title I schools. Lastly, survey item (c) asked principals to provide examples of when principals may need to take advocacy stances on educational inequity.

**Part IV: Areas of support for principals of Title I schools.** In this section, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on areas of support they have received as principals of Title I schools. Participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on any additional support(s) that have aided their development as instructional leaders.

**Part V: Background information.** In this part of the survey, principals were asked to provide background demographic information, which included gender, age, number of years as a principal, number of years teaching, and whether degrees/credentials were earned at private or public universities. This section also asked principals to identify the number of years they have worked in specific educational positions. The researcher used

this information to establish a descriptive profile of the principals who participated in the survey.

From the survey sample, principals who voluntarily provided their contact information on an otherwise confidential survey were selected to participate in an hour-long interview. These interviews allowed principals to further describe perceptions regarding instructional leader preparedness in Title I schools as well as to identify supports that principals perceived to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.

**Interview Protocol for Phase 2**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 108). In Phase 2, an interview protocol was developed and used so the researcher could gather information that would deepen his understanding about (a) principals' preparedness perceptions on instructional leadership and (b) principals' perceptions on the necessary supports to improve their instructional leadership skills. Patton (2015) explains:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe…We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then is to allow us to enter into another person's perspective. (p. 426)

The interview protocol also provided principals the opportunity to (I) describe their background in education; (II) describe their individual and unique experiences about their

preparedness regarding instructional leadership and supports; (III) elaborate on their identification of components of effective instructional leadership; (IV) express their thoughts on reculturing instructional leadership; and (V) add closing comments to any of their responses discussed during the interview. This information could not have been obtained with a survey.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedures for the study are described in this section. The collected data was used to answer the research questions in the most valid and ethical manner possible (Creswell, 2013). All principals participating from the seven school districts were invited to participate in Phase 1 (survey) of the study.

The researcher sent an email to all principals in the participating school districts with an invitation to participate, which included access to the survey. The survey began with a Letter of Consent. Only those participants who indicated that they agreed to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent advanced to the survey. Those who indicated that they would like to "opt out" automatically exited the survey. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide their email address if they wished to be contacted for a follow-up interview, or they were asked to contact the researcher via email to participate in Phase 2 (interview). No other individually identifying information was collected.

Of the survey participants (n=32) whose responses indicated that they were willing to continue to Phase 2, (n=10) participated in 1:1 semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher using an interview protocol but

also relied on the researcher to prompt, probe, and clarify as needed (Creswell, 2013). The participants had opportunities to ask questions of the researcher and learn more about the purposes and background of the study beyond what was initially shared. Each interview took no more than one hour; interviewees had the option of conducting the interview over the phone, in-person, online, or via email. The interviews were recorded on a password-protected audio recorder; they were then transcribed and stored in an online data storage, coding, and analysis program. Interviewees were assigned codes based on their number of years in administration and are referred to simply as 'administrators' in the findings sections to protect their anonymity.

The survey and interview data provided a more balanced and holistic description of Title I school principals. Information collected from the interviews helped to answer the study's research questions by providing a narrative for principals to describe their perceptions regarding preparedness as instructional leaders in Title I schools and to identify supports they perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.

**Organization of the Data Analysis**

**Quantitative analysis.** Principal data from the survey included ethnicity, gender, number of years teaching, type of credential, current grade level, and other grade level experiences.

**Qualitative analysis.** Qualitative analysis was used to group and analyze the data from open-ended questions in interviews and questionnaires. To organize the data, the researcher created an instrument alignment table. Responses were placed in the

appropriate section and aligned with the research questions. The steps in the analysis of this data were as follows: (1) similar responses were combined and aligned with research questions, (2) the researcher developed a summary phase for each group of similarities, (3) quotations were extracted and used within the narrative of the findings, and (4) findings were compared to the literature review while data was triangulated to strengthen validity, mitigating possible challenges to self-reported data.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are limitations to this research study, which must be considered when analyzing the findings. Not every principal completed the survey or interview process. There were (n=32) completed surveys out of (n=54) total principals. There were (n=10) principals who completed the interview process. Due to the limitations listed above, a low response would make the findings not generalizable.

In conducting interviews, there was potential for biases, limitations, and possibly other blind spots, such as the difficulty of getting accurate responses from participating principals in the school district in which the researcher works. Trust must be earned over time and the researcher's work experiences with the interviewees may be limited. The researcher could not ascertain if principals were giving him answers that he wanted or expected to hear. He also did not know if these participants would hesitate answering specific questions openly due to potential repercussions, especially if they were worried about information getting leaked to their superintendents.

In understanding the possible limitations of the study, the importance of reiterating to participants the study's security and confidentiality became clear. During the interviews,

it was important for the participants to feel comfortable talking about any and all issues, including district office staff and superintendents. They were given an opportunity to choose the meeting location to provide more relaxed environments to ease their stress about the interview process.

**Role of the Researcher in the Study**

The researcher served as a middle school assistant principal for five years, and he is currently completing his third year as an elementary school principal. The idea of researching principals' perceptions regarding preparedness as instructional leaders in Title I schools originated from the researcher's lack of preparedness and support received when he was a novice administrator. Throughout his eight years in school administration, the researcher has received very little support in the area of instructional leadership. Thus, he feels his impact on student achievement has been compromised. Furthermore, the researcher believes that instructional leadership is a skill set needed by all school administrators when they first enter a leadership role.

The researcher's positionality provided guidance as to how to shape this study's research questions, especially regarding preparedness and supports for instructional leaders in Title I schools. Thus, the research study was conducted through an objective lens, which meant putting aside personal biases, opinions, and past experiences related to this research. The researcher's current position as principal did not give him any authority over the study's participants. The researcher had minimal contact with principals in his school district during the time of this study. The participants for this research were volunteers and could cease their participation at any time.

## Summary

This chapter described the methodology and provided a rationale for the study. The population and sample were described. Developments of the survey and interview guide as well as procedures for data analysis were also described. Finally, limitations of the study were discussed. The next chapter presents an analysis of the data and discussion of findings of the study, and the final chapter presents key findings, conclusions, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed via an online survey and face-to-face interviews as a means to gather principals' perceptions about their preparedness as instructional leaders in Title I schools; to identify supports that principals perceived to be necessary in order to improve their instructional leadership skills; and to identify perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient leadership in Title I schools. The sections in chapter 4 include the sample profile, demographic profile of the sample, data analysis, the findings and discussions of the research study.

### Sample Profile

The sample included 32 principals leading Title I elementary, middle, and high schools. Table 3 presents principal characteristics of the sample along with the quantity and type of data collected from principals in this study.

Table 3

*Principal Characteristics & Distribution of Surveys*

| Profile Characteristics | Number of Principals (by school level) | Number of Surveys for Principals Sent Online | Total Online Surveys Completed |
|---|---|---|---|
| K-5 Grades | 32 | 32 | 19 (59%) |
| K-8 Grades | 3 | 3 | 2 (7%) |
| 6-8 Grades | 9 | 9 | 8 (28%) |
| 9-12 Grades | 10 | 10 | 3 (10%) |

*Note:* N=32.

Data was collected between October 1, 2017 and December 22, 2017. Surveys were emailed to 32 kindergarten through fifth grade principals, 3 kindergarten through eighth grade principals, 9 sixth through eighth grade principals, and 10 ninth through twelfth grade principals for a total sample of 54 kindergarten through twelfth grade principals (N=54). Of this sample, completed surveys were obtained from a total of 19 kindergarten through fifth grade principals, 2 kindergarten through eighth grade principals, 8 sixth through eighth grade principals, and 3 ninth through twelfth grade principals (N=32). The return rate was 59%, meeting the required minimum return rate of 50%, as set by the committee chair of this research study.

Of the 32 principals who completed the online survey, 10 principals also participated in face-to-face interviews. At the end of the online survey, participants were asked to provide their contact information if they were willing to follow-up on their survey responses via an interview. Interview respondents included six novice principals with three or fewer years of principal experience as well as four veteran principals with more than eight years of experience. Nine of these interviews were conducted at a school site after school, while one interview was conducted at a Starbucks coffee shop as per the principal's request. All interviews were conducted after the participants completed the online survey. The interviews took between 24 and 50 minutes to complete. All interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim.

**Demographic Profile of the Sample**

The demographic information on the survey was analyzed first. The frequency of responses for each demographic characteristic was used to profile the 32 principals who

participated in this study. The online survey gathered data on the demographics of each respondent as displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

*Demographic Profile of the Sample*

| Characteristic | Category | # of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 22 | 69% |
| | Male | 10 | 31% |
| Ethnicity | Asian | 4 | 13% |
| | Black or African American | 1 | 3% |
| | Hispanic or Latino, or Spanish Origin | 14 | 43% |
| | Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 1 | 3% |
| | White | 10 | 31% |
| | Some other race, ethnicity, or origin | 1 | 3% |
| | Decline to state | 2 | 6% |
| Year received administrative credential | 2010-2016 | 15 | 47% |
| | 2000-2010 | 15 | 47% |
| | 1990-1999 | 2 | 6% |
| Number of years as classroom teacher | 0-5 | 4 | 13% |
| | 6-10 | 15 | 47% |
| | 11-20 | 10 | 31% |
| | Over 21 | 3 | 9% |
| Educational degrees attained | MA/MS | 32 | 100% |
| | Ph.D./Ed.D. | 1 | 3% |
| | Other | 1 | 3% |
| Years as a principal | Less than 5 years | 13 | 41% |
| | 5-10 years | 14 | 44% |
| | 11-15 years | 5 | 16% |
| | More than 15 years | 0 | 0% |
| Leadership preparation program | University | 19 | 59% |
| | Other (County Office) | 13 | 41% |

*Note:* N=32.

As displayed in Table 4, there were 32 kindergarten through twelfth grade principals

who participated in the survey portion of the study. Ten were male, and 22 were female. Approximately 41% (13 of 32) of the principals who participated in the online survey had fewer than 5 years of principal experience while 41% of the principals had between 5 and 10 years of principal experience. Sixteen percent (5 of 32) principals had more than 11 years of principal experience.

One hundred percent (32 of 32) of the principal participants reported having master's degrees. Six percent (2 of 32) principals reported having attained educational degrees higher than their master's degrees. One principal reported receiving a Ph.D./Ed.D. while the other principal reported having a degree in another area. Including the academic year 2017-18, 41% (13 of 32) of the principals who participated in the online survey had three years or fewer as a principal in a Title I school.

The demographics of the participants in this study reflect a consistency with the literature on preparedness. Loeb et.al. (2010) described well prepared administrators as meeting the following criteria: a) advanced degree, b) not novice principals, and c) attended selective leadership preparation program (university). In this study 64% (19 of 32) principals met the criteria set forth by Loeb et.al. (2010).

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was organized and aligned with the research questions. The data was first organized by major categories identified in the knowledge base on instructional leadership (Robinson 2011). Quantitative data from the survey was analyzed first in order to determine key trends or patterns resulting from the highest response rate from the quantitative data (surveys) with a minimum response rate

of at least 50% (16 of 32) of principal participants. Open-ended questions from the qualitative data (interviews) were analyzed by identifying emergent themes and common strands of thought, focusing on similarities—such as common words—within the responses with a minimum response rate of at least 50% (five of 10) of principal participants. Examination of the response rate for each survey question along with comments provided during interviews offered a deeper exploration and understanding of the survey responses. Selected quotations from the 10 principal participants are provided. Literature is used to discuss both the similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative data in this study.

**Principals Experiences as Instructional Leaders in Title I Schools**

The first question in the study addressed principals' experiences as instructional leaders in Title I schools regarding the following: (a) preparedness, (b) supports, (c) challenges, and (d) successes?

**Preparedness for principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools.** Principals who completed the survey were asked to indicate perceptions about their preparedness to serve as instructional leaders in Title I schools. Survey data revealed principals' sense of preparedness to serve as effective instructional leaders (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Principals' Perceptions about their Preparedness*

| Items | Perceptions about their Preparedness as Instructional Leaders | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Principals as "Leaders of Learning" (Monitors instructional programs) | 17 | 53 |
| School vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students. | 16 | 50 |
| Promotes and supports collaborative processes | 15 | 47 |
| Knowledge of culturally relevant instruction | 15 | 47 |
| Strong relationships with parents and community | 14 | 44 |
| Data driven leadership | 12 | 38 |
| Promotes and guides the use of technology | 7 | 22 |

*Note:* N=32.

**Leaders of learning with a vision valuable to principal preparation.** Survey responses indicated that the principals in this study perceived two categories to be most useful to their development as instructional leaders: a) principal as leaders of learning; and b) the importance of having a vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students. As noted in Table 5, the principals' perceptions about their preparedness to be effective instructional leaders from the survey data indicated that 53% of principals (17

of 32) received quite a bit of support to prepare them be leaders of learning at their school sites. Similarly, 50% (16 of 32) of principals had received quite a bit of preparation in creating a school vision from their preparation programs.

More specifically, survey data indicated that principals felt their experiences as classroom teachers helped shaped their core values in instructional leadership. The findings from the quantitative data regarding lead learner and school vision were supported by the qualitative data comments in the open-ended section of the survey. One principal noted:

> I think my experience as a classroom teacher is invaluable. I can't imagine, personally, me being able to be an effective instructional leader, had I not had experience as a classroom teacher. I feel like a lot of my understanding, my comfort, and my confidence with respect to instructional leadership is rooted in my time in the classroom, and the support that I received during that time.

As Hallinger (2005) comments, " [i]nstructional leaders lead from a combination of expertise and charisma. These were hands on principals, hip-deep in curriculum and instruction … and unafraid of working directly with teachers on improvement of teaching and learning" (p. 224).

According to Robinson et al. (2008), teachers in higher-performing schools report that their principals are actively involved in collegial discussions of instruction as well as the impact of instruction on student achievement. The principals in this study, however, were located in low-performing Title I schools. Their comments reflected that the professional development they received was not sufficient. Comments from the principals included, "I received a lot of information in the area of leadership, and the components of a school vision that promotes academic excellence, but none of it seemed practical nor

specific to working in Title I school." Moreover, principals indicated that the staff worked together to review and improve teaching and learning through shared instructional leadership.

Fullan (2014) asserts that a principal must be able to build the social capital of teachers working together in relation to improving the teaching and learning of students, targeting the specific needs of students with meaningful instruction and fostering an environment of teachers who learn best practices from each other. Robinson et al. (2008) assert that leaders in higher performing schools work directly with teachers to plan, coordinate, and evaluate teaching and learning.

**Supports for principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools.** Principals who completed the survey were asked to identify supports which they received in preparation to becoming an instructional leader. The survey data revealed the areas of supports that principals had received in becoming an instructional leader (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Supports Identified as being Received by Principals*

| Supports | Instructional Leadership Supports Received | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Creating a culture of instructional learning | 25 | 78% |
| Promotes and supports collaborative processes | 23 | 72% |
| Principals as "Leaders of Learning" (Monitors instructional programs) | 19 | 59% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| School vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students | 18 | 56% |
| Mentoring and coaching | 16 | 50% |

*Note: N=32.*

In terms of supports, results from the quantitative data reveal several supports which principals have identified as receiving during their time as an instructional leader. Seventy-eight (25 of 32) percent of principals reported receiving support in creating a culture of instructional learning is important to their development as instructional leaders. Seventy-two (23 of 32) percent of principals reported receiving support in the area of promoting and supporting a collaborative process. Fifty-nine (19 of 32) percent of principals agreed that they received support in monitoring instructional programs. Fifty-six (18 of 32) percent of principals identified receiving support in creating a school vision. Principals discussed the needs for ongoing support in instructional best practices, effective feedback, and in the creation of adult learning cultures. Fifty (16 of 32) percent of principals identified receiving mentoring and/or coaching within their first five years. Principals did state in the open-end section of the survey that continued mentoring and/or coaching for all principals is needed due to the constantly changing instructional reform demands.

**Supports offered that create a culture of instructional learning.** Muth, Browne-Ferrigno, Bellamy, Fullmer, and Silver (2013) believe that increasing principal accountability on student learning leads to making knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy an important factor in the success of new principals. In the open-ended section

of the survey, principals mentioned the usefulness of their prior experiences as coaches or teacher leaders. Comments included:

> My prior experience as a coach for nine years has been one of the best training experiences for my role as a principal. I worked with teachers, principals, and district leaders in my role as a coach. I worked across a variety of grade levels and schools. I supported schools with data, planning, equity conversations, etc. I learned about coaching stances and team development. I would not have felt as equipped for my current role had I not been in my prior role for the last nine years.

The importance of teacher leadership is well documented in the literature. According to Muth et al. (2013), when principals develop teacher leadership roles, the pool of teachers experienced in working with adults in leadership activities expands and leads to improved learning outcomes. One principal commented:

The greatest influences on me as an instructional leader come from the time I served as teacher leader at my previous school. While there, I helped develop solutions to incredibly complex problems from schedule to budget to curriculum development and delivery.

Being a teacher seemed to help principals in this study become instructional leaders. Ortiz (1982) reports that role-identity transference from teacher to principal is an essential component of successful principal making. Furthermore, interview data asserted that principals' past experiences and knowledge in leadership positions shaped their leadership style, as captured by one principal: "I did not learn about instruction from professional developments. It occurred via 'on the job' experiences as opposed to 'workshops.'"

More specifically, interview data indicated that principals felt most supported as instructional leaders by past professor-mentors, colleagues with similar school concerns, and current instructional coaches. According to Aguilar (2012), instructional coaches play a rather narrow role in schools, working mostly with teachers in a one-on-one capacity. However, instructional coaches' work is important and can be instrumental in developing the skills of teachers. A principal commented:

> I could not be an effective instructional leader without an instructional coach to learn from and to continue my growth as an instructional leader. My coach facilitates grade level collaborations, and supports me in larger professional development as a thought partner. We connect a lot to keep focused on instructional priorities.

Being a teacher and principal can be very emotionally taxing. Coaches working with teachers and principals can support this need for emotional release. A principal's ability to develop as an instructional leader occurs, as one principal stated, "[o]nce I feel trusted and supported by my direct supervisor."

**Supports that assist instructional leaders in building a collaborative process.** Stoll et al. (2006) state that it is difficult to see active PLCs develop without the support and drive of leadership. In the open-ended section of the survey, a principal stated, "Working collaboratively and sharing best practices with other school leaders has been very helpful as well as being able to chat with fellow principals if I have any questions." Furthermore, data indicated that principals valued instructional leadership PLCs to collaborate, network, and improve their practices. Instructional leadership PLCs were established with some very clear intentions, namely to act as a learning space for supporting leaders in the establishment of effective adult practices to ensure academic

success (J. Sorich, personal communication, March 28, 2018). As commented by one principal, “It is really about connecting with people who are using best practices and are willing to share them with you as you move forward.”

The interview data indicates that purposeful collaboration is critical to principals becoming successful instructional leaders. A principal commented, “What has helped me as in instructional leader is due to me going outside the box [my district] to connect with individuals/organizations in order to get opportunities for myself or my school.” This principal confirmed that there is much more to being a successful leader than just attending meetings: “ I still think my district does things as they were done years ago, while the intent is to elevate administrators, how we go about it hasn't changed. I don't go to meetings and get inspired to go back to my school to make things happen.” While collaborative meetings and workshops are valuable, principals talked about the invaluable aspect of the collaborative: the confidence and security they get from having a peer support network**.**

**Supports that assist in monitoring instructional programs (leaders of learning).** As instructional leaders, principals must be able to construct the learning of adults at their school sites. In the open-ended survey section, a principal commented, “As the lead learner, I have received support in understanding key instructional practices and pedagogical approaches to learning.” Hattie (2012) asserts that successful instructional leaders must be able to foster teacher learning that affects student achievement. For example, Hattie (2012) believes that teaching in a Title I school requires developing a data-driven systematic approach with the support of district and school leadership that

supports teachers working collaboratively to raise student achievement. In the interview portion of the research study, one principal stated, " Visiting classrooms looking for the curriculum look-fors has allowed me to monitor instructional practices and progress, and lends to providing feedback and support for my teachers." Regarding student learning, instructional leaders attend to and affect everyone's learning quality. Hattie (2012) explains that the instructional leader sets the expectations for teachers as well as the standards for student achievement in his/her school.

Furthermore, Hattie (2012), asserts that school leaders who foster communication, allocate resources, develop organizational structures to support instruction and learning, and continuously collect and review data with teachers demonstrate learning leadership. The most powerful incentive for teachers to remain at school sites and in teaching is through the amount of support they receive from peers and their principal.

**Supports that assist in building a school vision.** According to Coldern and Spillane (2007), the practice of instructional leadership involves defining an instructional vision and mission with all stakeholders. Interview data indicates that principals receive support in what a school vision and mission statement should sound like and what it means to the school community; however, principals question how to create school-wide culture of buy-in from all stakeholders. One principal commented, "My former district did really thorough trainings in the area of creating a school vision, but us as principals never really made the connection of what it would look like at school sites." Developing the school's vision and mission are two of the most important steps toward creating a successful program. If they are clear and tangible, they give clarity and direction for a school.

Another principal noted, "You learn the aspects and structure to creating and fostering a vision of excellence in your preparation program, but it is all theory and once I became a principal, the support was missing for me."

**District support through mentoring and coaching.** A major theme that emerged from the qualitative data centered around mentoring and coaching. Hansford, Tennent and Ehrich (2003) provide the following definition of formal mentoring:

> Formal mentoring is a structured and coordinated approach to mentoring where individuals (usually novices – mentees and more experienced persons-mentors) agree to engage in a personal and confidential relationship that aims to provide professional development, growth and varying degrees of personal support (p.44).

Furthermore, the findings in this study supported the research by Hansford and Ehrich (2006) as noted in the following response by a principal on experience in working with a formal coach provided by their district through NTC:

> The district did assign a coach, or mentor, to me. That was a helpful resource, but that was not necessarily a resource that helped me with the instructional leadership piece. I feel like that was more a resource that helped me with the management piece, which was helpful, and definitely necessary, and needed, and appreciated. I think I was fortunate that there were a couple of folks that I had met prior to moving into that role of principal at San Jose State in their education department, I guess they were my unofficial mentors. They would stop by, check in on me, and helped me think through some of the more instructional leadership-oriented stuff. I'm very appreciative of them.

In the survey's open-ended section, principals commented on the types of support they received from their coaches and mentors: "My New Teacher Center Administrator Coach has been helpful with reflecting on my position and with how I go about leading a school"; "I have a mentor that meets with me every 2 weeks"; and "I had a mentor from another school site when I was going through a district leadership pipeline, but it was difficult because there was disconnect between and I think this was because we did not

have any direction" were common responses. Daresh (2007) asserts there is no doubt, beginning principals who have a relationship with a mentor who is willing to teach them the "ropes" will be able to gain greater confidence in their role as a principal. A principal supported this notion by stating, "I have been provided various opportunities for professional development, conferences, district levels of support from various departments, but it was not the same as having a thought partner to strategically plan with and discuss ideas with." Daresh (2007) believes school districts see the role of a mentor as someone to who focusing on the managerial side of the position with principals. However, this minimal approach does not foster the development of a principal as an instructional leader. Modern mentors need to be experienced and have expertise in teaching and learning in order to support novice principals according to the demands of educational reform in the 21st century (Daresh, 2007).

Fifty-six (18 of 32) percent of principals identified the need for mentoring and coaching the first five years in a principalship as well as the need for continued coaching throughout their careers in concordance with constantly changing instructional reform demands. Furthermore, the interview data indicates that principals realize the need for ongoing support as they continue their growth as instructional leaders. One principal commented, "I think about relationships. I feel like I rely on others so much in my work and that—I have that support because I've invested the time to build those relationships." Another principal commented on the various supports received and the impact of these supports: "The district does provide professional developments on areas of instructional

leadership, but in most cases these sessions serve as a guide, and do not foster deep thinking or significant learning in the identified."

Lochmiller (2014) presents descriptive case study of a recent three-year university-based induction program for novice principals, which examined the impact leadership coaches had on principals using a blended coaching model. The qualitative case study describes how coaches' support changed overtime with participant needs

Lochmiller (2014) found that the coaches adopted various strategies to support novice principals throughout the three years of the study. In the first year, the coaches relied on modeling as a form of their instructional coaching; however, they shifted to more facilitating coaching style in the second and third years. This shift led administrators to identify the challenges in their schools (Lochmiller, 2014). One of the coaches stated, "'I think new principals often lose their natural inclination to be instructional leaders…. We overwhelm them with tasks when at their core they remain classroom teachers.'" Furthermore, Lochmiller (2014), states that the coaches took every opportunity to remind principals to visit classrooms.

Lochmiller (2014) states principals were passionate when talking about the necessity of mentoring and trust in order to be effective instructional leaders. According to Kirkman (2013), believes spreading trust entails mastering directness about performance expectations and being comfortable together in working through conflict. Regarding mentorship, one principal noted, "I think that the key is having somebody that has the instructional leadership knowledge and skill set, but also, somebody who you feel like you can trust and really connect with, and is really there to help and support you." While

principals agreed on the importance of mentors to their development as instructional leaders, they also noted the benefit of having mentors who understand specific instructional programs and practices.

While Hansford and Ehrich (2006) provide positive outcomes to mentoring programs, they also expose some perennial problems with mentoring, such as insufficient time for mentoring and personality/expertise mismatches which can undermine the developmental relationship between mentee and mentor. One principal noted:

> Having an induction program for new principals with less than 5 years of principalship experience would decrease principal burnout. I'm going to tell you, I have a friend who, from being a teacher, became a principal of one of the toughest schools in the district. The poor woman is sinking. She was offered lots of support, but the support never really becomes reality, unless you have someone there telling you what to do. Now we don't have an induction program, many demands are just thrown upon us.

Principal commentary regarding collaboration demonstrated that when districts did not assign coaches, principals formed their own support group. Principals were able to recognize in themselves their under-preparedness to lead Title I schools and the need for support.

**Challenges for principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools.** Interview data indicates that principals continue to grapple with the everyday demands of leading Title I schools. Principals go through many challenges in the area of instructional leadership. At the same time, there is a growing shortage of educational leaders who are ready to take on principalships. Principals leave the profession due to increasing expectations placed on school reform as well as the lack of support. Challenges continue to present themselves as administrators attempt to balance effective instructional leadership with

efficient plant management. DiPaloa and Tschannen-Moran (2003) believe that principals need more time and better ongoing support in order to succeed as instructional leaders. The principals in this study described some of their biggest challenges in becoming effective instructional leaders:

> When you become an instructional leader with limited preparedness, experience, and support, you just have to take your position and run with it (School Administrator 1).

> You, as an instructional leader, cannot do it all, you have to share your leadership with others, and build upon others trends. This is easier said than done and I am still trying to grasp all the instructional components before I can truly lead in this area. I'm all about knowing what instructional tasks need to get accomplished in order to lead my school, but what do I need to do and how do I get it done (Interview School Administrator 2)?

> The work at a Title I school can be overwhelming. Not only must a principal understand the academic needs of students and how to develop teachers' instructional skills, but a principal must also understand trauma and its impact on student learning and help teachers to develop strategies to support students and themselves with the ongoing social-emotional challenges that arise (Interview School Administrator 5).

The principal's responsibility of improving classroom instruction for every student has been a part of the job description for decades, but it has become a top priority in the era of school reform. Classroom instruction must not only be supported by the principal but a principal must be the lead learner in supporting improvements in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lochmiller, 2014). Furthermore, principals are required to enhance their skills in teaching and learning in order to lead successful instructional programs. Research has shown that principals who are underprepared in the area of instructional leadership will have difficulty leading low-performing schools without ongoing support. This

under-preparedness will exacerbate the uneven distribution of principal quality across the nation's schools as underprepared novice principals are usually placed in low-performing schools. Improving the quality of leaders who can successfully lead low-performing schools is a pressing issue for everyone, including leadership preparation programs as well as state and national agencies (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014).

**Successes for principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools.** Interview data indicates that while leading a Title I school is very challenging, principals have had successes in their principalship. The principals in this study described that some of their biggest successes in becoming an effective instructional leader was in building a sense of community with students, staff, and families as noted in the comments below:

> I think my successes are working with parents and teachers to design outside of the box school settings. At my school site a lot of the success has come from those programs which have included parents and teachers in the design process (Interview School Administrator 2).

> At this point, I feel very proud of our positive school culture. We have been working very hard to get the students to learn how to communicate, and to learn how to avoid having conflicts within themselves. I can actually say that for the past two to three weeks, the number of discipline referrals to my office have been probably less than a dozen, because the students have learned how to get along with one another and tell each other how they feel (interview School Administrator 3).

> I feel like another success is that we have a number of really strong teachers, and I certainly try to leverage their skills and their expertise, and put them in positions to be models, supports and resources to our newer teachers (School Administrator 5).

Principals' successes are tied to relationships with parents and students as well as the establishment of a positive school culture.

**Necessary Elements to Improve Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools**

The second question in the study identified what principals believed as necessary elements to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools. Principals who completed the survey were asked to identify what they perceived as necessary to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Perceived Elements to Improve Instruction Leadership*

| Instruction Leadership Areas | Items Ranked by Importance to Instructional Leadership | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Professional learning communities | 25 | 78 |
| Personal teaching experiences and perspectives | 23 | 72 |
| Professional development or training received | 22 | 69 |
| Establishing goals and expectations. | 20 | 63 |
| Quality teaching and learning. | 18 | 56 |

*Note:* N=32.

**Professional learning communities.** PLCs continue to be at the forefront of principal needs in terms of leading Title I schools. Seventy-eight percent of the principals in this study report the importance of PLCs to instructional leadership. In the open-ended section of the survey, one principal commented, "Continuous improvement happens through collaborative adult learning, and by creating professional networks focused on institutional knowledge."

PLCs were also addressed directly in the interviews. During interviews, principals discussed the importance of the collaborative process to their learning curve as instructional leaders. A principal stated, "I think maybe I worked in eight to ten schools, some more intensively than others, but the most important component of transformation was collaboration through professional learning communities." Fullan (2014) asserts that continuous professional learning and student growth is guided by effective PLCs.

Principals agree that professional learning is important to their growth as leaders; however, they question the structure of professional learning. One principal commented:

> A collaborative process is important to our learning. At the same time, some people might think that's it's a waste of time. It's a fine line, the moment you start mandating what is done and giving them exact things to do at that time, you're then taking away that opportunity to support in other areas of needs.

Below is an example provided by this principal:

> For instance, yesterday it was nice to talk to other principals, and we got to talk about things that we've done really well and things we're struggling with in general, but then the rest the day was really focused in on walk-through tools.

**Personal experiences and perspectives.** Seventy-one percent of principals in the study believe that their personal experiences in education have shaped core values as instructional leaders. In the open-ended section of the survey, a principal commented, "As a teacher, I was able to engage in instructional practices and to really hone my craft, and I learned that education is much more than just numbers, it's about educating the whole child." The majority of principals come from the field of teaching. Teachers gain part of their socialization through leadership development (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Leadership development is encouraged among teachers but does not always correlate to them becoming principals. In this study, a principal commented:

> The greatest influences on me as an instructional leader come from the time I served as a teacher leader at my previous school. While there, I helped develop solutions to incredibly complex problems from scheduling to the budget to curriculum development and delivery. And the things I learned did not come from a professional development. They came from observing effective practice. They came from arguing different ideas and by finding the best one using the criteria of "do what's best for kids"—and implementing it.

During the interviews, principals revealed that prior teaching beliefs and practices, professional development, personal teaching experiences and perspectives, and involvement in decision processes shape their leadership skills. A principal stated the following in regards to how their beliefs affect their leadership:

> This required a lot of self-reflection to really understand the many ways my experiences have shaped me as a leader. I recently took time to actually stop and reflect upon my own racial experiences and was able to talk about it and how they have impacted me as an educator. How does that inform my beliefs about what school should be? The more we as educators discuss and self-reflect on our practices the more we're aware of our own perspectives and beliefs, we're better able to see how those impact our actions and the beliefs we have about children. I think that is extremely important as an instructional leader because that impacts the vision that you're ultimately trying to set.

**Professional development.** Sixty-eight percent of the principals contributed their growth as instructional leaders to the professional developments and training they received. In the open-ended section of the survey, one principal mentioned the following: "My school district in providing ILT professional developments and trainings in the following areas: Constructing Meaning, Benchmark Advance, Envision, and any other relevant curriculum implementation." This is an example of one school district providing support to instructional leaders on important curriculum initiatives. Despite support on curriculum initiatives, some principals still grapple with their districts, which they do not

feel provide the practical-outcome focused professional developments necessary to their development as instructional leaders. One principal stated:

> I know there are many pieces to our current curriculum, but I just haven't had much time to dig into the specific questions about our curriculum and how it's designed. I have a general sense because I'm learning that it's balance literacy based, and I understand that, but specific questions around how to navigate curriculum resources, especially because they're online, and there are times when I feel I don't really have the answer. I need to rely on someone.

According to Cole (2004), teaching and learning improves once a school district—along with its schools—share the importance of creating and fostering a culture focused on professional learning for all stakeholders. Thus, district leaders, principals, and teachers must work alongside each other with the same driving goal of improving teaching and learning to support student achievement.

**Establishing goals and expectations.** Sixty-three percent of principals report the establishment of goals and expectations as significantly affecting student outcomes. According to Robinson (2011), leaders can set goals but must also motivate those who implement these goal in order for these goals to be effective and attainable. In the open-ended section of the survey, one principal commented:

> Involvement in the decision-making process is an important factor when establishing goals and expectations. That's been a conscious effort here on our campus this year, trying to really get good input from our whole staff so that we're building leadership capacity, the overarching goal is to build a staff culture of an understand that they are a change agent for the students.

Educational leaders have become accustomed to setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals as measurements to assess progress. Robinson (2011) states that, in the absence of setting SMART goals, principals

should focus on creating learning goals. As principals learn more about their learning goals, they can make them more specific and measurable.

During the interviews, a principal stated the following in regarding establishing goals and expectations for his/her site: "I've seen enough teachers who end up feeling like, 'Well, I'm doing good enough,' or, 'I went through the motions today, and I don't care if students learned or not." This principal discussed that teachers need to have maintain the mindset that every child is capable and should be given the best opportunity to learn every day. This principal acknowledged that this shift in thinking starts with the leadership of the principals, specifically in their engagement of all stakeholders via the process of establishing goals and high expectations for all.

**Ensuring quality teaching.** Fifty-six percent of the principals agreed that ensuring quality teaching and learning affects student outcomes. Robinson (2011) stresses that leadership needs to be active and coordinated with instructional programs. Furthermore, school leaders and teachers must collaborate to review and improve teaching rather than working against each other. In the open-ended section of the survey, a principal commented:

> Student achievement is impacted by the degree to which adults are carrying out their practice effectively. There is no other way to improve achievement if adult learning is not part of the equation. We have to have quality measurements and data to be able to reflect and improve.

Principals in this study understood the need to ensure that quality teaching occurs daily in classrooms on their campus. In the interview, one principal commented, "During my first and second year as an assistant principal, the principal was out often, so I had to have a crash course on being an instructional leader of a school." Another principal

shared these sentiments: “I enjoy being able to give meaningful feedback on instructional practices, but how do I do this in a way that is meaningful to the teacher.” The degree of involvement principals demonstrate by visiting classrooms and providing feedback associated to teaching and learning sets clear performance expectations and standards for teachers (Robinson, 2011). Higher-performing schools report that principals who make regular classroom observations help teachers improve their teaching (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991).

**Instructional leadership framework.** The concepts of instructional leadership framework are based on five core beliefs. Principals ranked the core beliefs’ order of importance to them as instructional leaders. The online survey gathered data on core beliefs that were most important to principals (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Instructional leadership Framework*

| Instructional Leadership Core Beliefs | Items Ranked by Importance of Core Beliefs | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning. | 20 | 63 |
| A culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice. | 17 | 53 |
| Instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity in the school community. | 12 | 38 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and people—recruiting, hiring, developing, and evaluating—particularly in changing environments. | 8 | 25 |
| Instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders, of whom the principal serves as the "leader of leaders.: | 7 | 22 |

*Note:* N=32.

This section asked that principals rank five core beliefs about instructional leadership. The highest ranking core belief (20 of 32 or 63%) was a focus on learning for both students and adults. Robinson (2011) states, "This type of leadership requires a defensible and shared theory of effective teaching that forms the basis of a coherent teaching program in which there is collective rather than individual teacher responsibility for student learning and well-being (p.13)."

Shared instructional leadership is crucial to leading educational reform. With limited resources and multiple responsibilities, it is not possible for one leader to make significant, sustainable changes. Both principals and teachers must take ownership for the teaching and learning occurring at their school site in order to affect student achievement. In order to achieve this goal, quality staff must be hired and developed to work with diverse student populations. In the open-ended section of the survey, a principal commented:

> Education is a constantly changing field and we must stay on top of what works best for our students and be willing to continuously learn and grow. This is not just following the latest fads, but being intentional and monitoring the progress of what is happening in terms of instruction to improve student learning.

During the interview portion of the study, a principal made the following comment

pertaining to instructional leadership: "It is my top core belief because it is really important to be focused on learning and the very best instruction possible and dedication of teachers and staff to have a quality learning environment."

Fifty-three percent (18 of 32) of principals ranked the next highest core belief as a culture of mixed public and reflective practices as essential to effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice. In the open-ended section of the survey, a principal mentioned the following: "Reflection is a must. Whether you are an administrator, teacher, staff member, student, or parent at a school, you encounter different scenarios each day. You must reflect on what you are doing in order to improve

**Culturally Proficient Leadership**

The third research question in the study explored what were the perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient leadership in Title I schools? Participants were asked to determine the importance of three elements of culturally proficient leadership in Part III of the survey. Table 9 data displays the responses that principals identified as important to culturally proficient leadership in Title I schools.

Table 9

*Cultural Proficiency in Instructional Leadership*

| Cultural Proficiency in Instructional Leadership Elements | Items Ranked to Importance of Culturally Proficient Elements | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Strong Vision | 25 | 78 |
| Advocacy Stance | 16 | 50 |
| Culturally Relevant Instruction | 13 | 41 |

*Note:* N=32.

**Importance of a strong vision and advocacy for culturally proficient instructional leaders in Title I schools.** Seventy eight percent (25 of 32) of principals perceive a "Strong Vision" to be the most important element in culturally proficient leadership for Title I schools. Next in importance was "Advocacy Stance," with 50% (16 of 32) of principals seeing it as an important part to being culturally proficient; least important was knowledge of "Culturally Relevant Instruction," which only 41% (13 of 32) of principals viewed as important. In the open-ended section of the survey, principals were asked to write brief narratives that reflected their vision and philosophy of culturally relevant leadership, advocacy stance and knowledge of culturally relevant instruction as a way to assess culturally proficient leadership. The 10 interviewed principals were asked questions about the inclusion of cultural proficiency in instructional leadership for Title I schools.

**Vision and philosophy.** Culturally proficient leaders do not hesitate to confront a pedagogical school culture that creates obstacles and barriers towards closing the achievement gap. According to Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014), school leaders reject a culture of deficit thinking and are quick to notice and confront inequitable policies which may affect student achievement. They also engage in confronting and questioning such policies with teachers, district offices, communities, and families, challenging the "sacred cows" (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014, p. 4) in education—such as teacher and student placements, discipline policies, assessment, and transportation decisions—that may contribute to inequitable policies.

> My role is to ensure that each child has access to high quality education that allows them to unlock their potential. We will develop the resourcefulness,

> resilience and creativity necessary to be successful in today's and tomorrow's world, each child will engage in relevant project-based learning that incorporates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Students will see themselves as community advocates and agents of change, who can positively impact their community.
>
> As a leader in a Title I school, my belief in my students sets the tone for the rest of the school. It is imperative that maintain a non-wavering belief in the potential of ALL students and am always communicate that belief to all stakeholders of the team. While I need to be fully aware of the circumstances that impact the lives of my students, I also need to understand that these circumstances do not define the outcomes of my students.

**Advocacy stance.** Student population in public schools has become increasingly diverse while our leadership preparation programs remains focused on a universal model of leadership (Ritchie, et al., 2004). Recent studies of educational leadership acknowledge that administrators must be equipped with different skill sets, an advocacy stance, and cultural proficiency in order to successfully lead low-performing schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Lindsey, et al., 2005; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). This focus on advocacy was reflected in comments by the principals as noted below:

> Every single day, people have biases. Whether they admit it or not, some of those biases alter the way we interact and engage with students. Sadly, sometimes we take opportunities away from students because of what we think students can or cannot do. It is imperative to call out each other (in a tactful, respectful way) when we see these biases getting in the way of a child receiving an education.
>
> I see students coming from working class families, many who do not have the economic resources or opportunities their student counterparts have in places like Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Cupertino. And while students might come to school with extra emotional baggage, I believe that developing relationships with students and families is critical, and while it is difficult, a leader must have a vision for what the school is to be.

Mendoza-Reis and Smith (2014) believe school leaders can change the pedagogical culture at their school sites by fostering advocacy approaches in their leadership.

**Culturally relevant instruction.** Leaders of Schools with diverse learners need to view closing the achievement gap from a different perspective and approach to teaching and learning. Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) affirm that schools with diverse students require dynamic leaders who can look at education through a different lens in order to close the achievement gap. During the survey portion of the study a principal stated, "As a leader, the vision for what students can achieve at a Title I school should be no different than what students can achieve at non-Title I schools. Students across all communities have the potential to learn anything." The 21st century school leader will most likely serve their first principalship in a Title I school (Mendoza-Reis & Smith, 2014) and must be equipped with the best teaching practices to improve student achievement.

In order for students to reach their highest potential, all teachers must believe in their student's capacity and have the strategies to support their particular demographics of students, a fact that must be understood by leaders at Title I schools (Mendoza-Reis & Smith, 2014). One principal demonstrated his/her knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy:

> My role is to ensure that each child has access to high quality education that allows them to unlock their potential. If we engage each child in relevant project-based learning that incorporates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Students will see themselves as community advocates and agents of change, who can positively impact their community.

Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) assert that principal quality in schools must start with a focus on instructional leadership and pedagogical knowledge. Without personal and ideological clarity, the shift from a deficit school culture mindset—as seen in many low-performing schools—to one of an inclusive culture cannot occur, as previously mentioned in the reculturing instructional leadership conceptual model described in the second chapter of this study.

**Institutional level.** Instructional leaders are aware of the institutional inequities that serve as barriers to student achievement, attempting to address these inequities as best they can (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2014). Anderson (2009) notes that "[a]n advocacy leader believes in the basic principles of a high quality and equitable public education for all students and is willing to take risks to make it happen" (p.13). Anderson (2009) argues for a rethinking of educational leadership, which includes authenticity and advocacy that will challenge the status quo. Educators who become advocacy leaders must be prepared to identify and change policies on behalf of all students.

Principals in this study responded to institutional inequities and took advocacy stances. Principals took strong advocacy stances about teacher bias, low expectations, and deficit approaches to both students and families as indicated in the following comments:

> First of all, if a teacher wants to work at a school like mine, and has any issues with a particular race, this is not the place for that teacher (Interview School Administrator 1).

> Every student is different and biases and stereotypes are based on ignorance of a culture or a group. Is not uncommon to see many first-generation immigrants succeed in the U.S. These immigrants come to this country with dreams and a desire to achieve. If students of color are told they are not capable of achieving or are told they do not have the capability (with words or actions) to succeed they

> will not try. They will meet the low expectations others set for them. As leader, one must advocate for all students (Interview School Administrator 1).
>
> Challenging access issues for underrepresented student groups. Building bridges for families historically not welcome in education. Challenging low expectations and unconscious bias (Interview School Administrator 2).
>
> There is an important cultural component where families are involved and we do walk-throughs. We do parent involvement meetings. We try to really help the teachers understanding the culture for our kids. There's some specific, for example, there is an expectation at my school that 100 percent of the parents are attending parent-teacher conferences and not one can miss that. My teachers, they made to that expectation and it's a way for them to get to know the parents better, and their reality. Some of my teachers were shocked to hear some of the stories from parents (Interview School Administrator 2).

Principals also addressed institutional inequities, in speaking about school climate and culture addressing structural barriers such as disproportionate discipline.

> Our School Climate Committee is charged with looking at data trends and providing suggestions for alternative discipline to staff. Professional developments are also facilitated by this committee for staff and parents. This was needed as my school was the number one school in the county with the most out-of-school suspensions. When you look at the reasons for suspending students many of them were for willful defiance of a third grader, or willful defiance of a fourth grader, so I'm really excited about the opportunity for change (Interview School Administrator 4).

**Pedagogical level.** The conceptual model describes a pedagogy that includes culturally relevant knowledge. Culturally relevant pedagogy is defined by many scholars. Villegas and Lucas (2002) notes that culturally relevant pedagogy is instruction that builds upon students' cultural backgrounds and learning styles. Culturally relevant instruction requires teachers to gain knowledge about their students' cultures and then use this knowledge to create effective learning experiences. Interviewee comments about their pedagogical level included:

> It's important for teachers to get to know their students and understand their backgrounds. [They must] understand … the struggles that their students go through at home and support them in different ways when they're in the classroom. We have had conversations around social justice and inclusivity with all students. We had a conversation last Tuesday at our staff meeting as well. Not only about including students with disabilities, but we were looking at our LGTB community and if we knew which students needed support, and if they are being supported by teachers, and are being treated fairly by their peers (Interview School Administrator 1).

Cultural proficient leaders understand the importance of knowing their students. Comments included:

> It's about knowing where students come from, trying to have a sense of what their life experiences have been, the value in reaching out and getting to know family a little bit, and how, if you can spend some time getting to know your students, having a sense of what things look like and feel like at home, it can give you a better understanding, and a better appreciation for the student. We have had conversations about understanding our students' backgrounds. Understanding why they behave the way they behave. Using their knowledge, their background knowledge as a tool so they can use that in the classroom. Taking advantage of the students' social-cultural backgrounds to make learning more appealing to them (Interview School Administrator 2).

**Personal level (ideological clarity).** According to the conceptual model, principals develop ideological clarity when they examine and/or are aware of their own deficit assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning students in Title I schools. As instructional leaders, they must be able to encourage their teachers to do the same. Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) believe educational leaders must examine, name, and interrogate the deficit assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes about students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and of color in order to address insidious perceptual roadblocks to academic success and be able to transform and reculture the school's teaching/learning social, political, and personal environments.

Most importantly, Mendoza-Reis and Flores (2014) highly recommend that principals lead their staff in the process towards ideological clarity in order to transform the culture of the school to positive, action based. The principals in this study displayed ideological clarity concerning their leadership at Title I schools, as noted by the following statement regarding attitudes and beliefs about conversations concerning social justice and equity:

> My belief is that this has to happen, the conversations around social justice and equity have to be a part of the work in Title I schools. Now I haven't begun to do this because I also know that these conversations are difficulty. There are strategies that help make these conversations go more effectively than others, but in any case, they're hard because different people are coming to the table with different experiences and a different level of comfort in having those conversations. One of the things that I'm trying to do more explicitly in my first year is share a little bit more about my own beliefs, and I haven't really put out there any particular situations where we're having discussions around particular concepts, but just making sure I'm using language that conveys belief in equity, belief in our students (Interview school Administrator 2).

Fullan (2014) says the best administrators spend time developing, improving, and investing in relationships because positive relationships make schools extraordinary. True leaders build environments of trust, respect, professionalism, collaboration, teaming, and nurturing. Principals comments included:

> As a new novice principal, you cannot have those conversations, you first have to build the trust. This is my fifth year working with these people. It's not that you're going to stand in front of your staff saying, "This is ridiculous." It's that you have to first build trust through respect, through support, and conversations. That the staff sees you there, the staff sees you as a partner and not as a supervisor all the time. You have to wear different hats (Interview School Administrator 4).

> I think that in order to thoughtfully move into these conversations, I need to get to know my teachers a little bit more individually. I have a good sense of each of them broadly and have spent this first half of the year developing a sense of what's the best way to interact with different individuals, but I don't feel I have a good understanding of their experiences and totality to be able to know what's going to be the most appropriate way to enter these conversations. That's something that as a new administrator I'm also navigating, like how do you

> develop relationships with close to 30 some staff when you don't really have much individual time with them one to one, in a way where I can feel I know them enough to be able to thoughtfully put together some protocols or something to engage in hard conversations (Interview School Administrator 7).

**Summary**

This chapter reported and analyzed the survey and interview data collected through the online teacher survey and face-to-face interviews with principals. Use of the comments given by the participants when addressing the questions provided significant evidence. As such, participants were quoted to ensure accurate representation of their perceptions. The next and final chapter will summarize key findings, discussions, and conclusions, and recommendations.

## Chapter 5: Key Findings, Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations for Future Action

This chapter summarizes key findings and offers conclusions alongside a discussion generated from the key findings. Recommendations for future actions are presented in this chapter.

This study achieved its objectives as an exploration of principals' perceptions concerning their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools. Additionally, this study sought to determine the supports that principals perceived to be necessary to improve instructional leadership skills in their ever-shifting and challenging role as well as their perceptions of culturally proficient leadership in Title I schools.

The perceptions and experiences of participants in this study were explored via a mixed-methods, exploratory, and descriptive design, allowing for the exploration of data through multiple sources. Participants were able to recognize and share perspectives and collective experiences, informing this inquiry. The breadth and depth of findings collected in the survey and interviews provided valuable insights into principals' preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools.

### Research Question #1

What are the experiences of principals as instructional leaders in Title I schools regarding the following: (a) preparedness, (b) supports, (c) challenges, and (d) successes?

The first question in this study addressed principals' experiences as instructional leaders in Title I schools, interrogating their perceptions of preparedness, supports, challenges, and successes as instructional leaders.

**Preparedness.** Principals in this study reported receiving the support necessary from leadership preparation programs in the areas of principals as leaders of learning and development of a school vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students. Principals noted that their experiences as classroom teachers were invaluable and launched their paths as instructional leaders. At the same time, they reported their preparation as neither practical nor specific to working in low-performing Title I schools. Principals demonstrated that comfort and confidence with respect to instructional leadership was garnered in classroom time and the amount of support they received from other principals.

**Supports.** Principals identified receiving considerable support from their districts: a) to create a culture of instructional learning, b) promote and support collaborative processes, c) monitor instructional programs (principals as leaders of learning), d) develop a school vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students, and e) allow for mentoring and/or coaching.

**Challenges.** Principals identified challenges associated with being an instructional leader. Generally, they did not feel adequately prepared for this role, which required them to balance being an effective instructional leader with continuing to act as an effective plant manager.

**Successes.** Principals reported feeling most successful in their relationships with students, teachers, and families as well as in the establishment of positive school cultures. They were proud of their ability to connect with students, families, and teachers.

**Research Question #2**

What do principals identify as necessary in order to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools?

**Professional learning communities.** Principals reported the importance of having dedicated PLCs focused on continuous adult learning practices in order to improve teaching and learning. They believe PLCs are vital to their efficacy as instructional leaders in Title I schools. Similarly, they noted the importance of creating networks focused on institutional knowledge, thereby addressing issues of equity and unacceptable levels of proficiency and focusing on the development of instructional leaders. Principals understand the importance of PLCs and how these networks can be beneficial to professional learning and leadership growth; however, they questioned the structure of PLCs.

**Personal teaching experiences and perspectives.** Principals revealed that prior teaching beliefs and practices, professional development, personal teaching experiences and perspectives, and involvement in decision processes have shaped their leadership skills. Principals believe that enthusiasm in principalship stems from teaching experiences. Furthermore, they noted the opportunities and support provided from past principals that assisted them in their leadership develop.

**Professional development or training received.** Principals reported that their school districts do provide a variety of professional developments and trainings for them regarding the implementation of relevant curriculum. However, the quality of professional development was noted as being inconsistent. Principals specifically

mentioned a lack of coherency and/or focus in the professional development offered to school leaders. Their comments reflected rushed professional development, which failed to allow proficiency in the curriculum in order to be effective instructional leaders.

**Establishing goals and expectations.** Principals in the study noted the importance of communicating goals and expectations with the whole staff. Involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process allows for input and ownership as principals build leadership capacity within their staff. Furthermore, principals reported that this shift in thinking starts with their own leadership and their engagement of all stakeholders in the processes of establishing goals and high expectations.

**Quality teaching and learning: Principals highlighted the importance of adult learning practices to improve student outcomes.** Principals acknowledged that school leadership directly correlates to ensuring that the adults within the school environment are always learning and finding ways to improve their practice, focusing on the provision of quality instruction for all students. Principals understand the need to ensure daily quality teaching in classrooms across their campuses. While the principals understood their responsibilities to facilitate teacher growth, they acknowledged their own lack of skills about how to provide meaningful instructional support and feedback to their teachers.

**Research Question #3**

What are the perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient leadership in Title I schools?

**Culturally proficient instructional leadership**. In the area of culturally proficient leadership, principals in this study reported the importance of a strong vision of equity in education and taking an advocacy stance on behalf of their students. While sometimes not using the term culturally proficient instructional leadership, principals reported on all aspects of the conceptual model presented in this study (Mendoza-Reis et al., 2009).

## Conclusions and Discussion

Principals in the seven school districts in Northern California represented in this study are making progress toward strong instructional leaders in Title I schools. They understand and value all elements of instructional leadership as well as demonstrate the cultural proficiency necessary for Title I schools. However, principals also face multiple challenges in their ability to practice instructional leadership at their school sites. They are overwhelmed when they discuss principalship's increased demands and competing interests that prevent them from focusing on instructional leadership. Moreover, they understand that despite their preparation and supports, they have not become the effective instructional leaders necessary in Title I schools. They articulated additional components necessary for effective instructional leadership, such as collaboration and teacher leadership.

**Leadership preparation matters for instructional leadership in Title I schools.** Findings from this mixed-methods, exploratory, and descriptive study reveal the importance of a strong leadership preparation program. According to Loeb et.al. (2010), novice or temporary principals who do not hold advanced (master's) degrees and/or

attended less selective colleges are more likely to obtain their first principalship working with low-income students, students of color, and low performing students. These factors contribute to an uneven distribution in the quality of school leadership at Title I schools. However, the principals in this study all held advanced degrees. Yet, while the majority (60%) received their administrative credential through a university, the remaining principals (40%) were prepared through a county education office. Despite being well prepared, these principals were still struggling to become the extraordinary leaders needed in Title I schools. As a result, one can only imagine the struggle that under-prepared principals face in this time of educational reform.

**The complexity of the principal role impedes instructional leadership.** The provision of quality 21st century education and the responsibility of improving classroom instruction for every student have become major aspects of principalship (DuFour, 1999; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1998;). Principals from the seven participating school districts acknowledged that their role as school leaders has transformed throughout the years from that of plant managers to instructional leaders. They expressed frustration over having to become effective instructional leaders in an era of educational accountability and reform without having the sufficient and necessary skills, knowledge, and/or supports. They appeared to understand the consequences of the incongruity between their knowledge of good instructional leadership and the lack of time and/or resources in regards to their ability to become effective instructional leaders.

The principalship has become a complex and demanding job; as plant managers, principals ensured that classrooms were staffed and that the day-to-day operations ran

smoothly. However, in order to provide students with a quality 21st century education, the role has changed dramatically for modern principals. The responsibility of improving classroom instruction for every student has become part of a principal's role. Instructional leadership has become synonymous with principalship as principals' support improvements in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, et al., 2010; Lochmiller, 2014).

**Relationship as a factor that sustains principals.** Principals in this study were most passionate when they spoke about the importance of building relationships with the school community. In times of stress, they appeared to rely on being in classrooms with teachers and students. The successes the principals achieved in building relationships and fostering a positive school culture during their principalship have kept them motivated and eager to continue learning,

**District support is necessary but is not sufficient for developing instructional leaders.** It became evident via survey and interview data that principals valued their past experiences with educators and professors who they saw as mentors. The lack of robust principal coaching/mentoring offered by districts to support principals as instructional leaders failed to build instructional leadership competence. Principals exhibited frustration that more structure, follow-through, and ongoing support did not exist to help them understand instructional leadership. Principals who did have coaches/mentoring from outside organizations, such as NTC, became frustrated with coaches; they felt their time together was spent listening to their coaches tell stories about their own principalships. When principals had concerns and/or wanted guidance from the coaches,

they were unable to support them with concrete action plans and did not have the district context to fully support the principals. Thus, coaches were not employed by the district resulting in a gap in the information needed to fully support principals as instructional leaders of Title I schools.

New research shows that mentors can develop their mentees' strengths and abilities by deliberately compelling them to engage in accurate and productive self-reflection as well as practical application (Hall, 2008). Furthermore, Hall (2008) asserts mentors are deemed most effective when they cultivate habits of asking probing questions, providing honest feedback, listening, analyzing decisions, proposing alternative viewpoints, encouraging independence, fostering lifelong learning, and offering caring support for their mentees. Effective, positive mentors understand their mission concerns supporting mentees' learning, not helping them run their schools (Hall, 2008).

**The interview data indicated the principals' need for ongoing support as they continue their growth as instructional leaders.** Many principals in this study perceived that their professional development needed to be structured and focused on initiatives to improve instructional leadership. Principals realized and understood the importance of professional development but expressed that district-led professional development sessions needed to be grounded and fostered via a deeper level of thinking, significant learning outcomes, action steps, and ongoing site support. Principals have indicated the need for a coaching model for both novice principals and principals which instructional leadership support in differentiated and allow for them to share in the development of a

district will benefit their growth as leaders of instruction, as support is not necessary a universal model.

According to Sparks (2002), professional learning for school principals is most effective when it is long-term, planned, focused on student achievement, job-embedded, and supportive of reflective practice while providing opportunities to work, discuss, and problem-solve with peers. Furthermore, successful induction preparation is part of a comprehensive, district-wide program designed to encourage professional growth and development for all leaders. In conclusion, novice principals leading Title I schools have a special need for frequent, specific, and accurate feedback about their performance as instructional leaders. Fleck (2007) listed district-level constructs that bridge the gap between theory and practical knowledge, suggesting that school districts need to create a new principal induction program; create a quality mentoring program; set goals with new principals and meet to discuss them on a regular basis; create networking opportunities for new principals to meet together regularly; and require new principals to visit other principals within their district.

Principals' responses in this study assert the need for quality mentoring programs to support their leadership growth. Research responses indicated that those principals who had good relationships with their mentors believed mentorship to be beneficial to their success; however, those with tense mentor-relationships believed their mentors to be bothersome and hindrances to their success. Untrained mentors and ad hoc appointments, in which no one fully understands the district instructional initiatives, fail to support principals in their growth as leaders of Title I schools.

**Becoming culturally proficient instructional leaders in Title I schools: A necessary component.** Findings from this study indicate that these principals were progressing towards becoming culturally proficient instructional leaders. Building on what they learned in principal preparation programs, principals recognized the importance of strong visions, advocacy stances, and culturally relevant instruction in order for them to be effective as culturally proficient instructional leaders in Title I schools. In these responses, principals conveyed a shared passion for building relationships with students, teachers, and families. They gave many examples of taking advocacy stances on behalf of students and families in their schools. They reported on all aspects of this study's conceptual model, although they did not necessarily use the terminology of culturally proficient instructional leadership (Mendoza-Reis, et al., 2009).

**Successful leadership for Title I schools requires close look at additional supports.** Despite being well prepared, the principals in this study were still struggling to become the exceptional leaders needed in Title I schools. They were well-educated and understood all elements needed for instructional leadership; however, they do not appear to have received and/or were receiving any extra or additional supports to successfully lead Title I schools. They face the same challenges as their counterparts in more successful schools yet carry a heavier load due to the high poverty and other challenges in their schools.

**Recommendation: A Comprehensive and Coherent District Plan for Improving the Skills and Supports of Leaders in Title I Schools**

Districts would benefit from a comprehensive and coherent approach to professional development for school leaders that considers the needs of both novice leaders and more experienced leaders. A thoughtful plan might take into consideration the extra challenges Title I schools entail and provide extra supports for these principals. The issue of equity becomes an important issue for these principals as leaders.

The research findings support the literature about the importance of preparing and supporting both new and veteran principals in becoming successful instructional leaders in Title I schools. In the study, principals indicated that district-led induction programs are welcomed approaches to their growth as lead learners of teaching and learning; these programs also provide a sense of community as principals gain practical competencies in leadership theory. The following are recommended components for the district plan:

a) The various needs of the principals must be effectively intertwined with the needs of the districts. This entwinement will allow for school districts to outline instructional expectations for performance of their new principals. Additionally, direction, support, and follow-through can be provided to new leaders on instructional initiatives regarding expected action to improve student achievement. Moreover, districts should make provisions to address the specific learning needs of their new and veteran principals pertinent to their instructional leadership competence.

b) Novice principals benefit from triangulated support. Outside organizations offer such support, but districts should offer additional support through district-wide

induction preparation programs. These programs could focus on the instructional leadership areas specific to individual districts. They could include opportunities for new principals to have work sessions with seasoned principals. This work should be organic in nature and allow for group discussion and reflection while principals share their experiences, get feedback from each other, and work on tasks together.

c) A well-developed coaching/mentoring model. Districts must take the time to effectively pair mentors with mentees. Pairing mentors and mentees appropriately is critical to the development of novice principals, whose relationship with mentors can become either their greatest help or their greatest hindrance during the first year of their principalships. Mentors must meet regularly with their mentees at their schools. Agendas should be created by both parties in accordance with previous meetings and the goals set to be achieved between meetings. The nature of these meetings will be formal in their structure and purpose yet informal in the interaction between mentors and mentees. Mentors must have previous experience as school leaders to provide credibility in the eyes of their mentees.

d) Culturally proficient leadership. Sufficient district plans for supporting principals assigned to Title I schools require explicit attention to building cultural proficiency in school leaders. A universal approach to district planning for principal development is not enough for school leaders who lead schools with high poverty as well as culturally and linguistically diverse learners. These

schools require extraordinary and exceptional leaders who believe in the capacity of all children regardless of background.

**Conclusion**

This study provides insights into the unique leadership role of principals in Title I schools. The findings from this study suggest that school districts recognize the additional needs of these principals. Leaders of Title I schools must be exceptionally prepared. It is not enough for school districts to offer the same supports to Title I principals as their counterparts in more affluent schools. Just as the education system offers extra supports for students based on need, the leaders in Title I schools require additional supports in order to be successful. Equity of support does not mean equal for either students or leaders in Title I schools.

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Appendices

## Appendix A: Survey Instrument with Consent Form

Request Your Participation In This San José State University, Research Survey
Request for your Participation in Research
Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look
George Kleidon, Graduate Student & Dr. Senorina (Noni) Mendoza-Reis, San Jose State University Professor and Advisor

PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools, and identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.

PROCEDURES
In this voluntary survey, you will be asked to discuss your perceptions on instructional leadership practices and supports which prepared you to lead Title I schools. We anticipate that the survey will take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your perceptions on instructional leadership practices and supports which prepared you to lead Title I schools in detail. Please note that you have the right to skip any question(s) you wish at any point during the survey.

POTENTIAL RISKS
Some people may feel nervous about taking part in the research. However, no identifying information will be collected or used in the final report. Responses will be confidential. When necessary, ID numbers and pseudonyms will be used when analyzing and disseminating our results in the final report.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
While we do not anticipate any direct benefits to individual participants, surveys and follow-up interviews will help us to better understand and address the issue of principal quality in Title I schools. The findings may offer implications for strengthening hiring practices and professional development of principals in Title I schools that address a rethinking of instructional leadership skills.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Survey responses will remain confidential. Pseudonyms and identification numbers will be assigned to individual participants and used throughout the study. Neither school nor district names will be identified in reports which may be disseminated in this research study.

COMPENSATION
You will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card for your participation and completion of the survey portion of this research study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, please contact George Kleidon at george.kleidon@sjsu.edu. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Arnold Danzig, Director, Ed.D., at San José State, 408-924-3722. For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San José State University, at 408-924-2479.

Q1. Participation Consent

- ○ I agree to participate in this survey. Please Enter Email Address Below

  _____

- ○ I do not agree to participate in this study.

Q2. Please indicate your school level

- ○ Elementary K-5 (1)
- ○ Elementary K-8 (2)
- ○ Jr. High/Middle (3)
- ○ High School (4)

Q3. Please state your school district

Q4. Do you currently work in a Title I school?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q5. Is this your first principal assignment?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

**End of Block: Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look**

**Start of Block: Part I. Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports**

Q6. A. Following are instructional leadership areas taught in principal preparation programs. In your view, how much understanding did you have of these areas upon completion of your principal preparation program?

| | Quite a Bit (1) | Some (2) | Little or None (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| School vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Promotes and supports collaborative processes | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Principals as "Leaders of Learning" (Monitors instructional programs) | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Data driven leadership | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strong relationships with parents and community | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Promotes and guides the use of technology | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Knowledge of culturally relevant instruction | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q7. B. In your current role, please rank the areas where you have received support to become an instructional leader (support can be from professional development, district, conferences, central office, teachers, support staff, colleagues, or your family).

| | 1 (least support) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 (most support) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School vision that emphasizes academic excellence for all students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Promotes and supports collaborative processes | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Principals as "Leaders of Learning" (Monitors instructional programs) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data driven leadership | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Strong relationships with parents and community | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Promotes and guides the use of technology | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q8. C. What supports have you received from principal preparation programs, mentors, coaches, and/or your district that have been helpful in leading Title I schools (support can be from professional development, district, conferences, central office, teachers, support staff, colleagues, or your family)?

Q9. D. In your opinion, how have you been supported in building an instructional leadership culture by your district? Please provide examples.

**End of Block: Part I. Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports**

**Start of Block: Part II. Identifying Components of Effective Instructional Leadership**

Q10. A. In your opinion, which of the five leadership dimensions significantly impact student outcomes (please rank them).

1 being the lowest and 5 the highest

_____ Establishing goals and expectations

_____ Resourcing strategically

_____ Ensuring quality teaching

_____ Leading teacher learning and development

_____ Ensuring an orderly and safe environment

Q11. B. In your view, how important are the following areas to instructional leadership?

| | Quite a Bit (1) | Some (2) | Little to None (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professional learning communities | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Personal prior (teacher) beliefs and practices | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Professional development or training received | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Personal identity (as a school leader) | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| District role in providing support | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Personal teaching experiences and perspectives | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Involvement in decision-making processes either at district level | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q12. C. The concepts of the instructional leadership framework are based on five core beliefs. Please rank them in order of importance to you.

1 being the lowest and 5 the highest

_____ Instructional leadership is learning-focused, learning for both students and adults, and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning.

_____ Instructional leadership must reside with a team of leaders of which the principal serves as the "leader of leaders."

_____ A culture of public practice and reflective practice is essential for effective instructional leadership and the improvement of instructional practice.

_____ Instructional leadership addresses the cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity in the school community.

_____ Instructional leadership focuses upon the effective management of resources and of people recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating, particularly in changing environments.

Q13. D. Please give a rationale for your top core belief from question C.

**End of Block: Part II. Identifying Components of Effective Instructional Leadership**

**Start of Block: Part III. Reculturing Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools**

Q14. A. In your view, which is most important in leading Title I schools? Please rank. 1 being the lowest and 3 the highest

_____ Knowledge of culturally relevant instruction

_____ A strong vision of culturally proficient leadership

_____ Taking an "advocacy stance" that addresses institutional bias

Q15. B. Write a brief narrative that reflects your Vision and Philosophy of leading Title I schools. Please provide sufficient details to adequately illustrate your response.

Q16. C. Please give an example of when a principal may need to take an advocacy stance about an educational inequity.

Q17. D. Please list the best teaching practices for teachers who work in Title I schools and give a rationale for why you think these are most important.

Q18. E. Additional Comments. Is there any other information you would like to share about being an instructional leader in a Title I school?

**End of Block: Part III. Reculturing Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools**

---

**Start of Block: Part IV. Areas of Support for Principals' of Title I Schools**

Q19. A. Below is a list of statements dealing with areas of support that are important in developing instructional leadership skills (support can be from professional development, district, conferences, central office, teachers, support staff, colleagues, or your family). Please check the areas of support that you have received.
Please check the areas of support that you have received:

- [ ] Knowledge of subject matter, how students learn, best practices
- [ ] Moderately professional
- [ ] Knowledge of how teachers learn and how to support teachers
- [ ] How to lead instructional reform
- [ ] Mentoring system for novice principals (less than 4+ years in the position)
- [ ] Mentoring system for all principals (more than 5+ years in the position)
- [ ] Peer/buddy coaching
- [ ] Opportunities for dialogue
- [ ] Visiting other schools in district
- [ ] Establishing communities of practice
- [ ] How to conduct classroom walkthroughs

☐ Instructional leadership culture in your school

Q20. B. Is there anything else you would to add about has helped you develop as an instructional leader?

**End of Block: Part IV. Areas of Support for Principals' of Title I Schools**

---

**Start of Block: Part V. Background Information**

Q21. A. What is your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Q22. B. In what year did you receive your Administrative credential?

- ○ 2010-2016
- ○ 2000-2010
- ○ 1990-1999
- ○ 1980-1989

Q23. C. What institution did you receive your administrative credential from?

Q24. D. How many years in total have you been a principal?

- ○ Less than 5 years
- ○ 5-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ More than 15 years

Q25. E. Degrees

- ○ MA/MS
- ○ Ph.D./Ed.D.
- ○ Other _____

Q26. F. List the teaching credentials you currently hold and the granting institution.

Q27. G. What previous positions have you held in education? How many years?

Q28. H. Optional: Please indicate your ethnicity

Please check all that apply

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- ☐ Middle Eastern or Northern African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Some other race, ethnicity, or origin
- ☐ Decline to state

**End of Block: Part V. Background Information**

**Start of Block: Participation in Follow-Up Interview:**

Q29. Thank you for participating in this survey. Would you be willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up 1:1 interview?

Note: your response to this question will be dissociated from your responses to previous questions.

- ○ I am interested in participating in a one-to-one Interview.

- ○ Thanks, but I am not interested in participating in a follow up study.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol Script

### Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look
### Principal Interview Protocol Script

I. Provide Context

"The goal of this dissertation is to learn how districts can provide principals with support needed to be an effective instructional leader. Therefore, our purpose today is to better understand your preparedness to be an instructional leader in a Title I school, and to identify the supports you perceive to be necessary to improve your instructional leadership skills. There is no right or wrong answer; I am simply interested in what you have to say on the research topic. At any time during the interview you may ask to skip any questions or opt-out of the interview."

II. Confidentiality:

"The data gathered from this research is highly confidential. Pseudonyms and identification numbers will be used throughout the study. I will be the only person with access to this information. Paper copies will be provided of this interview if asked. 'Off-the-record' responses are acceptable and will allow you to express your feelings of discomfort with certain questions."

III. Recording and Transparent Disclosure of Data Use:

"Would you be comfortable with me recording your interview? Audio files will be deleted and transcriptions will be destroyed once the study is complete."

**Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look**
***Principal Interview Protocol***

**Date: _____ Participant Name/ID: _____**

**Site ID: _____**

## I. Background Questions

A. Please describe your background in education.
   i. What grade levels and/or subjects have you taught?
   ii. What other positions have you held in education?
   iii. Describe your current school site.

## II. Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports

A. What have been your successes in instructional leadership?
B. What supports have helped you achieve these successes?
C. What challenges have you faced in becoming an instructional leader?
D. Do you have a support system? Who's included in this support system? Why?
E. When do you feel most competent in your role as an instructional leader?
F. When do you feel more pressured? What are challenges to your competence?

## III. Identifying the Components of Effective Instructional Leadership

A. In the survey, you identified the most important components of instructional leadership. Can you elaborate on why you picked these elements as most important?

## IV. Reculturing Instructional Leadership: Reculturing instructional leadership for Title I schools requires that principals lead their teachers in an advocacy approach to teaching (Personal, Institutional, Pedagogical).

A. Pedagogical
   i. How do you feel in leading your teachers in a social justice approach to teaching?
   ii. How do you feel in leading your teachers to understanding a sociocultural perspective about teaching and learning?

B. Personal
   iii. How comfortable do you feel about discussing issues of educational inequities?

C. Institutional
   i. How competent do you feel about recognizing institutional discrimination at your school site (Example: referrals of students to your office)?

## VI. Closing Comments

A. Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to add? Thank you!

## Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

**Interview Consent Form**
**Request for your Participation in Research**
***Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look***
*George Kleidon, Graduate Student & Dr. Senorina (Noni) Mendoza-Reis,*
*San José State University Professor and Advisor*

**PURPOSE**
The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools and to identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.

**PROCEDURES**
In this voluntary interview, you will be asked to discuss your perceptions on instructional leadership practices and supports which prepared you to lead Title I schools. We anticipate that the interview will take no longer than one hour to complete. You may "opt-out" of the interview at any time. The interview will be audiotaped for later transcription.

**POTENTIAL RISKS**
Some people may feel nervous about taking part in the research. However, no identifying information will be collected or used in the final report. Responses will be confidential. When necessary, ID numbers and pseudonyms will be used when analyzing and disseminating our results in the final report. Once study is over, audio files will be permanently deleted and transcriptions will be destroyed.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS**
While we do not anticipate any direct benefits to individual participants, surveys and follow-up interviews will help us to better understand and address the issue of principal quality in Title I schools. The findings may offer implications for strengthening hiring practices and professional development of principals in Title I schools that address a rethinking of instructional leadership skills.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
Interview responses will remain confidential and those volunteering for the interviews may opt for off-site, over-the-phone, in-person, or on-line communication to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms and identification numbers will be used throughout the study. Audio files will be deleted and transcriptions will be destroyed once the study is complete. Neither school nor district names will be identified in reports which may be disseminated in this research study.

**COMPENSATION**
You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card for your participation and completion of the interview portion of this research study.

**PARTICIPANT RIGHTS**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

**QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study, please contact George Kleidon at george.kleidon@sjsu.edu
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Arnold Danzig, Director, Ed.D. at San José State, 408-924-3722.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San José State University, at 408-924-2479.

**SIGNATURES**

Your participation consent below indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

**Participant Signature**

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Participant's Name (printed) | Participant's Signature | Date |

**Researcher Statement**

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent Date

***May we contact you regarding future and/or follow up studies?***

*(Please circle one)* Yes No

## Appendix D: IRB Protocol Narrative

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**HUMAN SUBJECTS-INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

**PROTOCOL NARRATIVE**

### I. APPLICATION

See attached.

### II. PROJECT TITLE

*Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look*

### III. INVESTIGATORS AND STAFFING

| NAME OF INDIVIDUAL | QUALIFICATIONS | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|---|---|
| *Senorina (Noni) Mendoza-Reis* | *Senorina (Noni) Reis is a faculty member at SJSU and holds a doctorate in Organizational Leadership. She has been conducting research for more than 15 years, and is the author of several articles in the fields of educational leadership and effective education for English Learners. N. Reis has completed the CITI IRB Training.* | *N. Reis will serve as the Faculty Advisor (FA) for this project and will oversee all phases, including project design, data collection and analysis, and dissemination.* |
| *George Kleidon* | *G. Kleidon is a doctoral student at SJSU and holds a Bachelor degree in Administration of Justice and a Master of Arts degree in Education (Administration and Supervision). Additionally, he holds a Professional Administrative Services Credential, an Educational Specialist Credential from San José State University, and a Single* | *G. Kleidon will serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) for this project and will be involved in all phases, including project design, data collection (at only xxx participating schools), analysis, and dissemination. He will work closely with and under supervision of the FA throughout this project.* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Subject Teaching Credential from National University.*<br><br>*He has worked in education for a total of fifteen years to date. He was a teacher for seven years, an assistant principal for six years, and a principal for two years.*<br><br>*G. Kleidon has completed the CITI IRB Training.* | *PI will only collect data from seven school districts participating in the study. The PI has worked in three of the participating school districts: San José Unified School District, East Side Union School District, and Alum Rock Union Elementary School District.*<br><br>*The PI is in a supervisory position of classified and certificated staff at his current school site.* |

**IV. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

***a.*** *The participants in the research study will reside in the seven school districts listed below:* XXXXX

***b.*** *The FA has no affiliation or financial interest within the participating school districts. The PI is currently employed as a site principal by Alum Rock Elementary Union School District (ARUESD) which is one of the participating districts.*

***c.*** *As a principal, the PI maintains a supervisory role within ARUES, but not over any of the participating principals. The study does not involve treating, assessing, or training participants. The PI will make it clear that participation is entirely voluntarily. There are no consequences or repercussions for non-participation. Participants may opt-out at any time during the study. Separate consent forms will be given for Phases 1 and 2 (see Section VII. E below).*

**V. ABSTRACT**

*In schools and districts across the country, the role of school leaders has been transformed throughout the years. Barnett (2000) states that the role of today's school administrator has changed from that of a plant manager to an instructional leader (DuFour, 1999; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Lockwood, 1996). As plant managers, the role was to ensure that classrooms were staffed and that the day-to-day operations were running smoothly. Throughout the last few decades, the responsibility of improving classroom instruction for every student has become a part of a principal's role. Instructional leadership has become synonymous with the role of principal as principals support improvements in teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lochmiller, 2014; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). Leading instructional programs requires principals to enhance their expertise in teaching and learning.*

*Riordan (2003) further notes that the impact of school leadership on student learning is not so apparent in low-performing schools. Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng (2010) report that low-income students, students of color, and low-performing students are more likely to attend schools led by novice or temporary principals who do not hold advanced (master's) degrees*

*and who attended less selective colleges. An uneven distribution in quality of school leadership can jeopardize the achievement of students in low-performing schools. How to improve the quality of leaders who can successfully lead low performing schools is a pressing issue for everyone, including leadership preparation programs as well as state and national agencies (Mendoza-Reis & Flores, 2013).*

*Goals/Purpose of the Proposed Project: The purpose of this study was to (1) describe the perceptions of principals about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools; (2) identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills; and (3) understand perceptions of principals regarding culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools.*

*Research Questions*

1. *What are the experiences of principals as instructional leaders in Title I school regarding the following: (a) preparedness, (b) supports, (c) challenges, and (d) successes?*
2. *What do principals identify as necessary to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools?*
3. *What are the perceptions of principals about culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools?*

## VI. HUMAN SUBJECTS INVOLVEMENT

### A. SUBJECT POPULATION

*The participants of this study will consist of approximately 90 principals between the ages of 25 and 65 from varied ethnic and gender backgrounds. The participants are employed in the following school districts: Alum Rock Union Elementary School District, East Side Union High School District, Evergreen School District, and Franklin-McKinley School District. All participation will be voluntary and participants will have the option to opt-out of any phase of the research at any time.*

*Those who consent to participate in the survey will be asked if they would like to be considered for Phase 2 of the study. Of those who consent for the follow-up interviews, approximately 7-10 participants who first meet the selection criteria of representing the participating school districts will be selected for Phase 2. Once the participating districts are represented, no additional volunteers will be accepted so as to maintain balance of district representation.*

### B. RECRUITMENT PLAN

*The PI will download the 2016–2017 California Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) School-Level Data file from the following California Department of Education Link: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filessp.asp, which was updated on May 9, 2017. This FRPM school level data file will be used to identify the school districts and schools which are*

*classified as Title I schools for the purpose of this research study. Title I schools are designated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as part of the 1965 initiated War on Poverty; these are schools with greater than 40% of students designated as low income.*

*Phase 1. The PI will send an email to all principals in the participating school districts with an invitation to participate, which will include access to the survey (See Section VIII). The survey will begin with a Letter of Consent. Only those participants who indicate that they "agree" to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent will advance to the survey. Those who indicate that they would like to "opt out" will automatically exit the survey. At the end of the survey, participants will be asked to provide their email address if they wish to be contacted for a follow-up interview, or they may contact the PI via email to participate in Phase 2 (interview). No other individually identifying information will be collected.*

*Phase 2. Those individuals who provide contact information at the end of the survey will be contacted by the PI via email to schedule an in-person, over-the-phone, or online interview. Prior to the interview, these participants will be asked to complete a second Letter of Consent that will ask for permission to conduct the interview (See Section VIII). The consent form for the interviews can be sent and returned via email or postal service mail (to include a self-addressed and stamped return envelope).*

*To mitigate any possible coercion, the study will include seven school districts. Additionally, this may provide a better understanding of the findings through gaining multiple perspectives. The FA and PI will collect email addresses of potential participants from each of the participating public school district websites.*

**C. RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN/PROCEDURES**

*This study will be a mixed-methods, exploratory, and descriptive study, which is appropriate to provide a description of principals' perceptions about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools. The descriptive study allows for an exploration of the types of supports principals identify as necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills. Data collection will begin upon IRB approval for a period of four months. It is expected that this research study will be completed by spring 2018.*

*Phase 1. Approximately 90 principals from the participating school districts (see section IV) will be invited to complete a 29-item survey that will seek to describe their perceptions on preparedness as instructional leaders and the supports they perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools.*

*Phase 2. From this survey sample, principals, who have volunteered and provided their contact information on the confidential survey, will be selected to participate in a one-hour interview. They will further describe their perceptions about their preparedness to be instructional leaders in Title I schools as well as identify supports that they perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.*

**D. MATERIALS AND DEVICES**

***a.*** *The instruments for this study include a survey and an interview schedule (attached). The survey (Phase 1) for principals developed for this study consists of the following parts: (1) Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports, (2) Identifying the Components of Effective Instructional Leadership, (3) Reculturing Instructional Leadership, (4) Areas of Support for Principals' of Title I Schools, (5) Background Information, and Participation in Follow-Up Interview Consent.*

*Phase 2 of this study is an interview schedule. The interview schedule will gather information that will deepen the researcher's' understanding about the perceptions of principals on their preparedness as instructional leaders in Title I schools. Furthermore, the interview will identify supports that principals perceive to be necessary to improve their instructional leadership skills.*

*The interview schedule will provide principals the opportunity to (a) describe their individual and unique experiences about their preparedness of instructional leadership; (b) describe their individual processes and practices in instructional leadership, exposing some of the challenges associated with such; and (c) describe the ways in which instructional leadership preparedness affects how they perceive instructional leadership. This information could have not been obtained with the survey.*

*The questions for the Interview Schedule is divided into four parts: (a) Background Questions; (b) Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports, (c) Identifying the Components of Effective Instructional Leadership; and (d) Reculturing Instructional Leadership. A digital voice recorder will be used to record participants' interview responses.*

***b.*** *No cognitive or psychological tests will be employed.*

***c.*** *The proposed study includes analyzing initial survey data (Phase 1),which will be followed by coding, theming, and analyzing interview data (Phase 2). The PI will record data on a master spreadsheet which will be kept on a password-protected computer. Audio files will be permanently deleted once transcribed. Transcriptions will also be stored on a password-protected computer. The below link is for the Phase I survey and includes the consent form: Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look Survey*
***(See Section VII.E.)***

**E. CONFIDENTIALITY**

***a.*** *To protect confidentiality, ID numbers will be assigned to individual participants and will be used to throughout the study. Neither school nor district names will be identified in reports which may be disseminated in this research study. For hard copy files, data and materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the PI's home. Only the PI will have access to these documents. Upon the use of the aggregated data, the PI will destroy all collected data, which will include a permanent deletion of all audio files. Electronic files will be stored on a password-protected computer and iPad.*

***b.*** *The information described above will be stored electronically on the PI's laptop computer and iPad. The laptop and iPad will both be password protected.*

**F. COMPENSATION**

*Participants in the survey portion of the research study will be compensated with a $5 Starbucks gift card. Participants in the follow-up 1:1 interview portion of the research study will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card.*

**G. POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

*While there are no foreseeable benefits to individual participants, it is anticipated that the findings will be generalizable and will be shared with the participating school districts to help them better understand and address the issue of principal quality in Title I schools. The findings may offer implications for strengthening hiring practices and professional development of principals in Title I schools that address a rethinking of instructional leadership skills.*

**H. POTENTIAL RISKS**

*In general, this study involves no more risk than what participants would encounter in everyday life. Given the procedures described above, there is minimal risk of the release of personal information.*

**I. RISK REDUCTION**

*See Confidentiality (Section VI. E.) above.*

**VII. INFORMED CONSENT**

**A. CONSENT PROCESS**

*For Phase 1 (survey), participants will be asked whether they "agree" to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent before they are allowed to proceed with the survey. Participants may skip any question or discontinue their participation in the survey at any time. Only those participants who choose to provide their contact information at the end of the survey will be contacted to participate in Phase 2 (interview). Selected participants for Phase 2 will complete a second Letter of Consent when they are contacted to schedule the interview. During the interview, participants will be able to opt-out at any time and skip any questions.*

**B. ASSENT PROCESS AND OTHER SPECIAL CONSENT PROVISIONS**

***a.*** *N/A.*
***b.*** *N/A*

**C. WAIVER OF WRITTEN CONSENT**

*N/A*

**D. DEBRIEFING**

*N/A*

**E. CONSENT FORMS**

*Letter of Consent (Phase 1) attached (as first page of survey)*
*Letter of Consent (Phase 2) attached*

**VIII. OTHER**

*Agreement Letters from Outside Institutions*
*Copy of Online Survey attached*
*Copy of Initial Survey Recruitment Email*
*Copy of Email for Phase 2 Participants attached (interview)*
*Interview Protocol Script attached*
*Interview Protocol attached*
*Copy of CITI Course Certificate attached*

## Appendix E: Instrument Alignment Matrix

***Principals' Instructional Leadership in Title I Schools: A Closer Look***
**Instrument Alignment Table**

| Research Question | Survey Item | Interview Question |
|---|---|---|
| (Background/Demographic Information) | Part V. 4A-4J<br>. | **I. Background Questions**<br>Item A: Subsections i, ii, and iii |
| 1. What are the experiences of principals as instructional leaders in Title I school regarding the following: (a)preparedness, (b) supports, (c) challenges, and (d) successes? | Part I. Items 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D<br><br>Part IV. Items A, B | **II. Instructional Leadership Preparedness and Supports**<br>A. What have been your successes in instructional leadership?<br>B. What supports have helped you achieve these successes?<br>C. What challenges have you faced in becoming an instructional leader?<br>D. Do you have a support system? Who's included in this support system? Why?<br>E. When do you feel most competent in your role as an instructional leader?<br>F. When do you feel more pressured? What are challenges to your competence? |
| 2. What do principals identify as necessary to improve their instructional leadership in Title I schools? | Part II. Items 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D | **III. Identifying the Components of Effective Instructional Leadership**<br>A. In the survey, you identified the most important components of instructional leadership. Can you elaborate on why you picked these elements as most important? |
| 3. What are the perceptions of principals about culturally proficient instructional leadership in Title I schools? | Part III. Items 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E | **IV. Reculturing Instructional Leadership**<br>Item A: Subsections a, b, and c<br>Personal, Pedagogical & Institutional |